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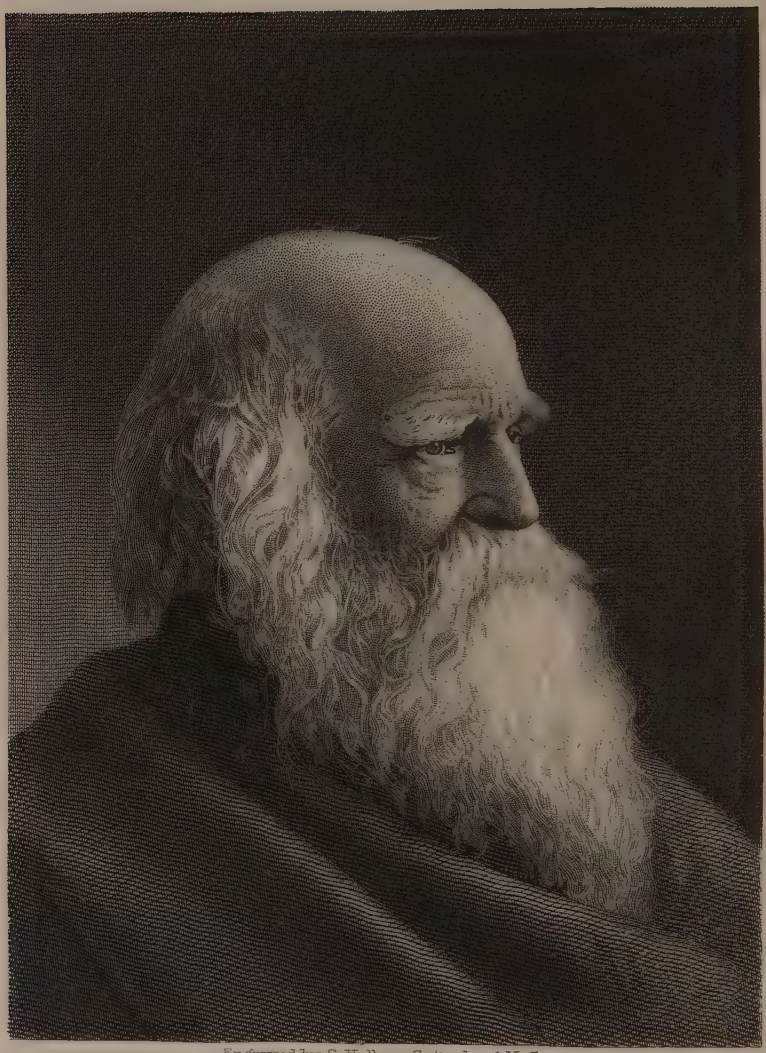
LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

VOL. II.



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William Cullen Bryant

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A BIOGRAPHY

OF

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT,

WITH

EXTRACTS FROM HIS PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

BY

PARKE GODWIN.

IN TWO VOLUMES:

Volume Second.

NEW YORK:
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A SECOND VOYAGE TO EUROPE.

A. D. 1845.

WRITING to Mr. F. E. Field, in September, 1844, Mr. Bryant, after recalling their pedestrian tours in many parts of the United States, exclaimed: "Would that I could have accompanied you in your visit to Stonehenge and other old places in your walking excursions! But these are dreams: the probability is that I shall never visit England nor you come to New York. I shall go on a mere journalist until I am worn out; and you will remain an amiable old bachelor, leading an industrious, rational, contented life, too well satisfied with your home to change it, and feeling too strongly that decline of enterprise which creeps over us with years, to cross again the Atlantic, when you have so beautiful a country as your own for pedestrian tours." In a few months after these sighs were uttered, he was making preparations for the visit which he had deemed hopeless. A young friend and fellow-member of the Sketch Club, of culture and entertaining manners, Mr. Charles M. Leupp, was about to make a tour of England and the Continent, and solicited his companionship. It was a temptation too strong to be resisted, and, on the 22d of April, 1845, they found themselves on board a packet-ship, with all sails set, for the other side of the ocean. After a passage of about thirty days, they passed the Irish and Welsh coasts, and were landed in Liverpool—that other New York, with cleaner streets and finer public buildings. Mr. Bryant's first call was

upon the Rev. James Martineau—a young Unitarian clergyman, who has since placed himself in the front rank of British essayists—with whom he passed a delightful evening, full of talk about Unitarianism in England, and of the great Unitarians at home—Dewey, Ware, Furnace, Parker, and Hedge. Of course, he ran down to Chester, the quaint old town, and looked into Eaton Hall, the spacious and costly seat of the Marquis of Westminster, with its parks and shrubberies, its dells and nooks, and its iron bridge over the Dee. Passing through the valley of Edale, in Derbyshire, along the peak of the Peverills, he stopped at Chatsworth, at Haddon Hall, at Rugby, a village in a luxuriant plain, where Dr. Arnold had his school, and at Birkhampstead, where Cowper was born, arriving in London the first week in June.*

Once in the metropolis, no modern tourist bound to "do" the whole of Europe in a month could have been more incessantly active and indefatigable than he was in seeing the sights. His brief pocket-Diary—which, save a few notes to his newspaper, is all the record we have of his movements—speaks of Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall, the new houses of Parliament, the Tower and Greenwich, the British Museum and the Docks, Windsor Castle, Hampton Court and Richmond, the National Gallery, and the Exhibitions. With these he filled up the days; and in the evening, with Mr. Edwin Forrest, the tragedian, and his wife—old home acquaintances—he went to Covent Garden or the Haymarket or the opera, where Mario, Grisi, and Castellan sang, or Cerito and Taglioni danced. He did not omit Dolly's Chop House, the Cider Cellars, and even the Judge and Jury, to which, however, he only gave a glance to get more than enough of it. The main attractions for him were the picture-galleries, particularly those containing specimens of the older artists, of which there are many in the English collections, both public and private. For the paintings of the Royal Academy he expresses no admiration. Of Turner, "a great artist and a man of genius," he re-

* Of some of these trips there are descriptions in "Sketches of Travel."

marks that his later works "were mere blotches of white paint with streaks of yellow and red, and without any intelligent design," while he thinks that Haydon "had spoiled several yards of good canvas with a hideous picture of Uriel and Satan." He excepts the water-color drawings, a branch of art in which English artists were eminent, having given to it "a richness, a force of effect, a depth of shadow, strength of light, and truth of representation, which astonishes those who are accustomed only to the meagreness and tenuity of the old manner."

It was a special pleasure to him, in the dearth of other merit, to be directed to a print-shop in Pall Mall, where he found a new statue by his countryman, Powers, just coming into notice. "The statue," he wrote, "represents a Greek girl exposed for sale in the slave-market; the hands are fettered, the drapery of her nation lies at her feet, and she is shrinking from the public gaze. I looked at it with surprise and delight. I was dazzled with the soft fulness of the outlines, the grace of the attitude, and the exquisite perfection of the workmanship. I could not help acknowledging a certain literal truth in the expression of Byron concerning a beautiful statue—that it

"'— fills
The air around with beauty.'

It has fixed the reputation of Powers and made his fortune." "Some whispered criticisms have been uttered, but they appear to have been drowned in the general voice of involuntary admiration."

A day or two after his arrival, Mr. Everett, the Minister of the United States, called upon him, and invited him to meet a few prominent literary men at breakfast. He was there introduced to Samuel Rogers, Thomas Moore, R. Monckton Milnes (now Lord Houghton), and Mr. Kenyon, who occupies so amiable a place in the memoirs of Landor and Dickens. "Rogers," says the Diary, "was very kind; he took me to his house and to my lodging; talked of poetry, etc., and gave me a

general invitation to his breakfasts." At breakfast the next morning he met with Mr. Babbage, the economist; Mr. Poole, author of "Paul Pry"; Mr. Spedding, author of Bacon's works, and others, and was shown the letters of Bacon, Milton's contract for the "Paradise Lost," and other literary treasures with which the house overflowed. In fact, Rogers's house seems to have been open to him at all times, as he speaks of breakfast after breakfast there, and of the many distinguished persons whose acquaintance he made through the kindness of its host.

Among those of note with whom Mr. Bryant came into relation in London were Dr. Bowring, "an intellectual-looking man;" Miss Joanna Baillie; Mr. and Mrs. Howitt, and their daughter; Leigh Hunt, "who talked agreeably of Shelley and Byron," and a Mr. Simmons, a poet of 'Blackwood.'" Perhaps the pleasantest day he spent was in taking a row down the Thames with Mr. Edwin Field, the barrister, who had with him Mr. Crabbe Robinson, the intimate friend of Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, whose reminiscences, since imparted to the public,* Mr. Bryant found very fascinating. They dined at Medenham Abbey, "whither the monks of Medenham, the Abbot Wilkes, and other profligates, used to resort," and returned over the fields. Of the parliamentary orators he seems not to have heard the best, if we may judge by this brief entry in his Diary:

"JUNE 16th: . . . In the afternoon went to the House of Commons, and sent in my card to Mr. Milnes, who had promised to take me in; he was out. Sent card to Mr. Brotherton, of Manchester; not in. Went to the House of Lords. Lord Campbell was making a speech in favor of the Maynooth Grant—feeble and affected. Bishop of Landaff spoke on the other side—plain and pretty well. Lord Ellenborough spoke afterward in a sounding oratorical manner. Lord Shrewsbury, a Catholic, made a set speech in favor of the bill, which he sung like a Baptist preacher. The Duke of Manchester said a few

* Diary and Correspondence of Henry Crabbe Robinson. London: MacMillan & Co.

words wretchedly enough. The Duke of Newcastle spoke against the bill — a deplorable stammerer. Wellington defended the bill; articulation imperfect, like that of a drunken man; hesitation and stammering; but he spoke pithily and to the point, and was listened to with the deepest attention."

Nor was he much more impressed, a few days later, in the House of Commons:

"JUNE 23d: Went to the Commons. Sir James Graham spoke in a persuasive, business-like manner. Lord John Russell said a few words; manner not good. Lord Morne, a Catholic, spoke badly. Mr. Wise, a Catholic, passably well. John O'Connell very badly. Mr. Milnes, Lord Cline, and Mr. Alcott—"

But there the entry stops. He had previously attended a meeting of the Corn Law League, of which he simply remarks in the Diary:

"JUNE 18th: Went to a Corn Law meeting at Covent Garden Theatre. Cobden, Bright, and Fox spoke. Mr. Fox alluded to my presence, and quoted the 'Hymn to the City.' Theatre crowded; men and women respectable in appearance and orderly, though enthusiastic."

In his "Letters of a Traveller" he adds: "Cobden in physiognomy and appearance might almost pass for an American, and has a certain New England sharpness and shrewdness in his way of dealing with a subject. His address was argumentative, and yet there was a certain popular clearness about it, a fertility of familiar illustrations, and an earnest feeling which made it uncommonly impressive. Fox is one of the most fluent and ingenious speakers I ever heard in a popular assembly." The writer says nothing of the compliment Fox paid him, but the reports of the day inform us that it was received with salvos of applause, which he was obliged to acknowledge by rising and bowing to the audience.*

From London, Mr. Bryant, by invitation of some one of the

* He seems to have seen nothing of Dickens while in England.

managers, attended a meeting of the British Association at Cambridge. It gave him the opportunity of seeing many of the most eminent men of science in the world; but we have only the brief account which his Diary gives of this most interesting occasion. It says:

"JUNE 24th: At Cambridge, received at the Hoop Hotel by Sir Charles Fellows, who was waiting. He presented me to Mr. Hallam, the historian. Went with him to Peter's College, and through King's College; heard service chanted in the noble old chapel, boys singing; fine music. Went over Trinity College, the finest in Europe. Dr. Whewell, the master of this college, gave us a luncheon. Saw Mrs. Challis and Mrs. Airy, wife of the astronomer Royal, and another lady who talked with me of my poetry. Mr. Yates was with us. Went to Christ's College, where the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Matlock, gave me a piece of Milton's mulberry, and a fac-simile of Milton's handwriting. Mr. Strong, a poet, took us to the ordinary of the Red Lion. Mr. Jerdan, the editor of the 'Literary Gazette,' introduced himself to me; also Dr. Buckland, Rev. Mr. Gaskell, and Mr. Morgan, the mathematician. Professor Sedgwick presided at the dinner, and proposed several toasts: among the rest, prosperity to the United States, and a health to Mr. Bryant. I answered in a few words, and proposed a toast. Evening at the Senate House; it was full of gentlemen and ladies. Conversed with Dr. Lyell and his lady, and her two sisters, and with Sir Henry Banbury and his lady. The Marquis of Northampton took me in his carriage to the observatory, where we looked at a double star; different colors of their light. Mr. Challis, the astronomer, present.

"JUNE 25th: Breakfasted with Dr. Whewell, of Trinity College. Mr. Hutton, the geologist, and his daughters, at the table; also, Dr. Scoresby, and Sir Vernon Harcourt and his lady. Lessons from the Epistle, part of the Litany, and the Lord's Prayer, read by Dr. Whewell before the breakfast, the servants being called in. Went to a meeting of one of the sections. Professor Sedgwick presided; Professor Ansted read a paper on the ventilation of mines. Professor Michael Faraday discussed the subject, which he thought a difficult one. Dr. Buckland said a few words; Dr. Roberts a few. Visited several of the colleges with Sir Charles Fellows; went up Castle Hill, a little eminence. Dined in Trinity College Hall, the Marquis of

Spineto, an Italian settled at Cambridge, being a guest. In the evening went to the general meeting of the Association in the Senate House. Sir John Herschel presided. Sir Vernon Harcourt, son of the Archbishop of York, made a speech—sing-song. Dr. Graham, Master of Christ's College, made a set speech, and a good one; Professor Sedgwick followed, and made a better, but not a set speech; Dr. Buckland spoke in a measured manner; the Dean of Ely, Dr. Peacock, not so well; Mr. Airy more naturally."

Here was material enough for a great many personal details; but Mr. Bryant, having himself suffered from the impertinence of visitors who saw him for a moment or two, and then wrote columns of gossip in regard to his appearance, character, and habits, felt always an inveterate repugnance to describing the individuals he encountered. Even in his private correspondence he was chary of it, although sometimes in his talk he would introduce the most agreeable reminiscences of them, and, being an excellent mimic, bring them before his hearers in the most vivid light.

But his object in visiting England was not to see illustrious persons so much as beautiful things, the green lawns, the rich meadows, the soft hills, the silvery light and shade, the old baronial halls, the glorious cathedrals, that render her landscapes, if not the most beautiful, the most sweet and tender, of any in the world. These he was able to find in all their wealth and variety when he took up his residence with his friend Mr. Alfred Field, living near Leamington, in the heart of Warwickshire, and within reach of some of the noblest objects of human curiosity. Thence, his feet or a pony carriage would carry him in a little while to the fine old town of Coventry; to Gothic-turreted Oxford; to the picturesque environs of Guy's Cliff; to the lordly estates at Blenheim; to Warwick and the ruins of Kenilworth; to Hucknall Church, where Byron lies buried; to Newstead Abbey, where he lived; and, chiefest of all, to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he whiled away day after day in the shadow of Shakespeare's imperial name. On one of these trips (to Sheffield) he was taken by

"Mr. Weeks, a poet, to see the venerable James Montgomery." "Found him at a place called the Mont, a little out of town, in a grand stone house, living with two ancient ladies, aunts of Mr. Joseph Gales, of the 'Washington National Intelligencer.' A well-preserved old man, timid and gentle; he talked of American literature, praising Longfellow, and of the railroad mania. He was a light-made man, in a huge black silk cravat that filled his neck beyond the chin, rather thin-faced, with a thin, long nose. His conversation agreeable, but not striking. Beautiful view of valley and hills from his door and windows."

It is scarcely out of the way, if at all, in going from England to Scotland, to take in the English lake district, whither Mr. Bryant could easily have fancied himself transported from his own Western Massachusetts—the grand outlooks everywhere are so like. He desired greatly to see Wordsworth, the Father of the School of Nature, to which he also belonged; but he would not have intruded on the solitude of the poet if he had not been urged to do so by Mr. Crabb Robinson, who prepared the way for him by a letter. Of the interview we possess no written report but this mere dotting of the Diary:

"July 10th: Went by posting, as the English say, frem Kendal to Ambleside—thirteen miles. Was soon among craggy mountains, half covered with heath, green dells, and rapid brooks. Fine glimpses of Windermere; we reach the lake at Lowwood. Stop at Commercial Inn at Ambleside, commanding a grand view of the mountains. Drove in a carriage to Mr. Wordsworth's, and sent in our cards, with Mr. Robinson's. Mrs. Wordsworth, Mrs. Fenwick, Miss Fisher, and Miss Southey, daughter of the poet, at home. Mr. Wordsworth was in the garden, in a white broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat; he received me very kindly; showed me over his grounds, his study, etc. Beautiful view of Windermere from his house, and of Rydal Water from part of his grounds. At six o'clock took tea with him, after having first looked at Stock Ghyll Force. He showed us the fall of the Rothay in Rydal Park, belonging to Lady Fleming. Left his house at ten o'clock in the evening."

"July 11th: Called on Miss Martineau at Waterhead, on the

lake, a mile and a half from Ambleside. She took us to see Fox How, late the cottage of Dr. Arnold, built of unhewn stone, faced with a green, grassy hillock behind, and Mount Fairfield, with its deep valleys, in front. Returned over the meadows in sight of a pleasant spot, on which Miss M. is to build a cottage. Took coach to Keswick; passed Fairfield, Lakes Rydal and Grassmere—both beautiful. Passed Helvellyn; came to Keswick, a village on Derwent-water, which lies in the midst of a grand group of mountain-tops. Saw Mr. Southey's house, no longer occupied by his family, in the midst of trees, on a little eminence near the Greta run. Saddleback, Skiddaw, the vale of St. John, pleasant meadows between bare ridges of mountains. Came to Bassenthwaite, the last of the lakes we saw, through Cockermouth, and thence in the rain to Maryport, on the western shore, where we took the railroad to Carlisle."

Mr. Bryant often recurred in conversation to his pleasant visit to Wordsworth; but one always suspected that, much as he reverenced the poet, he was not very strongly impressed by the man. Wordsworth had a way of talking of himself and his poetry, which must have seemed strange, if not ludicrous, to one so habitually reticent, in the same respects, as our traveller. Besides, they were not particularly sympathetic in their opinions. Mr. Bryant was a thorough Democrat, and Wordsworth a Tory, and their conversation, if it strayed at all beyond the precincts of nature and literature, could not have been in the highest degree congenial. After his return, Mr. Bryant sometimes amused his more intimate friends with imitations of Wordsworth's reverent manner of repeating his own verses—not, however, in a way that lessened respect for the venerable bard.

At Edinburgh, "the finest city he ever saw," he sought for John Wilson, who had, unfortunately, gone into Westmoreland; and thence he made the usual tour through the Scotch lakes by the Trossacks, stopping for a day in Burns's country, and, after a journey in Ireland, returning to London, whence he passed over to Paris. Paris he found greatly changed within ten years; the plan for converting the old mediæval Paris, with its narrow, dirty streets, into the modern Paris of

broad and brilliant boulevards, which has since been carried out with such energy, was already begun. Many magnificent edifices were going up; and Mr. Bryant fancied that he saw a considerable improvement in the external morality of the inhabitants. They were, however, the same gay people, craving amusement, and easily amused; and crowding the theatres, the *guinguettes*, the dancing-places, with frantic eagerness. He was glad to meet there an old acquaintance in Vanderlyn, one of our earliest artists, who was finishing his picture of the "Landing of Columbus," now in the Rotunda of the Capitol at Washington. Of his expedition on the Continent, the incidents of which are given in some detail in his "Letters of a Traveller," * he makes a rapid summary in a letter to Mr. F. E. Field, dated London, November 3d:

"We have made," he writes, "a rapid but most fortunate journey through Europe. We have had good health, good weather, and the opportunity to see almost everything we desired; we have met with no misfortunes, no accidents, no disappointments, and scarcely anything which could be called annoyances. We went from Paris, after a fortnight's stay, to Brussels, to Antwerp, to the Hague, to Amsterdam, to Utrecht, then up the Rhine, visiting its cities on our way, and the watering-places of Wiesbaden, etc., to Manheim, where we crossed over to Heidelberg. From Heidelberg we made an excursion to Strasburg and Baden-Baden, and, returning, visited the cities of Wurtzburg, Nuremberg, Leipsic, and Berlin. We then turned our course to the southeast, and, having seen Dresden, Prague, and Vienna, crossed the Styrian Alps, passing through Gratz, reached Trieste, and took a steamer for Venice. From Venice we went through Padua, Ferrara, and Bologna, to Florence, and next to Rome and Naples. A steamer brought us from Naples to Leghorn, and then to Genoa, whence we crossed the mountainous country to Milan, and from Milan went by Lago Maggiore to the foot of the Alps. We walked up the Simplon one bright moonlight night, which gave us, perhaps, a more striking view of its remarkable features than we could have had by day, and, as the morning broke, found ourselves on its summit. At Geneva,

* See "Sketches of Travel," vol. i.

where we passed several days, we fell in with my old friend, Professor Anderson. From Geneva we came in the diligence to Paris, where we were obliged to make but a brief stay, that we might give a couple of days to London."

During this time, Mr. Bryant was fortunate in meeting old and making new acquaintances. At Dusseldorf he fell in with the artists Hunt—who has since achieved such distinction—and Leutze, "a young man of promise, devoting himself with great energy and earnestness to his art." They carried him to the studios of Schröter, "a man with humor in every line of his face," of Köhler, and of Lessing, who was just sketching out his now famous "Martyrdom of John Huss." His former friends, Henry Wheaton and Theodore S. Fay, introduced him to whatever was rare or notable in the city of Berlin. He saw Horatio Greenough again at Florence, engaged on his group of "The Indian and the Hunter," "an image of the aboriginal race of America overpowered by the civilized race," which now adorns the eastern front of the Capitol. Hiram Powers was there, too, working on his "Proserpine," "an ideal bust of great sweetness and beauty," with "the statue of 'Eve,' the fatal apple in her hand, standing beside it—which the world has just begun to admire." Nor was he any the less happy in encountering at Rome many artists of eminence: Overbeck, "a thin, narrow-faced man, with the hair parted in the middle of the top of the head"—Auerback, whose landscapes are "fine and faithful"—Wyatt and Gibson, the English sculptors; Henry Peters Gray, "reproducing the very colors of Titian"; and H. K. Brown, just executing his statue of "Ruth Gleaning in the Field of Boaz." Of the latter, Mr. Bryant said:

"When I saw his 'Ruth,' I was greatly struck with it; but, after visiting the studios of Wyatt and Gibson, and observing their sleek imitations of Grecian art, their learned and faultless statues, nymphs, or goddesses or gods of the Greek mythology, it was with infinite pleasure that my eyes rested again on the figure and face of 'Ruth,' perhaps not superior in perfection of form, but certainly infused with a

deep human feeling, which I found not in their elaborate works. The artist has chosen the moment in which Ruth is addressed by Boaz, as she stands among the gleaners. He quoted to me the lines of Keats, in 'The Song of the Nightingale'—

> "'Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn.'

She is not in tears, but her aspect is that of one who listens in sadness; her eyes are cast down, and her thoughts are of the home of her youth, in the land of Moab. Over her left arm hangs a handful of ears of wheat, which she has gathered from the ground, and her right rests on the drapery about her bosom. Nothing can be more graceful than her attitude, or more expressive of melancholy sweetness and modesty than her physiognomy."

He reached home in November, 1845, and was glad to get back. "You cannot think," he wrote to Mr. Dana, in December, "what an interest I feel in my house. It is almost as dear to me as one of my children. My heart yearned after it during the whole of my absence in Europe. I used to beguile the qualms of sea-sickness, as I lay in my berth, in thinking over my little plans for its improvement—such as planting a fruit-tree here and a shade-tree there, and clearing away the growth of shrubs about some fine young pear-trees that had sprung up in a corner of my field." These were pleasant pursuits to which to return; but in the political world the excitement was by no means abated. It was, indeed, hotter than ever. Congress, after a long and stormy debate, had ratified the annexation of Texas, and aroused the belligerent spirit of Mexico; and a new subject of dispute, the boundary of Oregon, threatened to involve us in a war with England. Happily, the latter calamity was averted by negotiation; but not the former. Our troops on the southwestern frontier had been ordered to the Rio Grande, and took position on the left bank, in January of 1846.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

A NEW EDITION OF THE POEMS.

A. D. 1846.

In the midst of political disputes, on which the future fate of the republic depended, Mr. Bryant found very little time for writing verses—so little, indeed, that, when he was applied to some time before for an ode to be sung at the Berkshire Valley Celebration, he was obliged to decline after he had accepted the task. What he did write at this period—such as "The Waning Moon," "The Stream of Life," and "The Unknown Way"—breathe of the depression and anxiety with which he contemplated passing events. But none the less he was able to revise his older poetry and to prepare it for a new edition, which Messrs. Cary & Hart, of Philadelphia, were about to issue, as one of a series of superbly illustrated publications.

Writing to Mr. Dana on the subject, he requested him to make a critical examination of the poems that he had written, and to indicate such as Mr. Dana might deem unworthy of a republication. "I suppose," he said, "you have read them all, and that they have left some impression, favorable or unfavorable, which, in looking them over again, you will be apt to remember, without taking the trouble to read them a second time. If your former impressions were unfavorable in regard to any one of them, you will counsel me, of course, to omit it." This was written in December, 1845; but on the 13th of January, 1846, he recurs to the subject:

"I promised some time since to send you a copy of my poems which should contain everything in the latest editions. I found among my pamphlets the other day a copy of an English cheap edition which has all my poems that have been published in a single volume, and, as it can be conveniently sent by mail, I have had it put in a wrapper and directed to you. You shall have something better than this shabby pamphlet when Cary & Hart's edition is out. You will oblige me by letting me know your decision in regard to these poems as soon as you have looked them over. When I first thought of asking your opinion as to which of them should be left out of the new edition, it occurred to me that I would say to you that I would not bind myself to confirm all your nominations. But, on talking with you, it appeared to me that you were disposed to be very lenient with me, and that if you erred you would err on the side of mercy; so I said nothing of what had before been in my mind. . . ."

Mr. Dana undertook the task, and in a week or two returned a criticism, which, if it were not too long, I should like to copy, as an evidence of the minute care to which these elder poets subjected each other's writings. He takes each poem in its turn, points out the words or lines that he dislikes, or that do not impress him pleasantly, and, in some cases, he objects to entire poems as unworthy of the others. Mr. Dana concludes some twenty closely written pages thus:

"Here I believe I must stop, for I do not know what more there is for me to find fault with. You may not agree with me in several of these particulars, and, what is more, many others might not, which is an additional reason for not keeping back any of them. But, as I have said, they amount to but little in bulk, and it might materially affect the sale of the work if it did not include all that you have before published in a collected form. You must have published in various periodicals some pieces which I have never seen, for I read no magazines, and only one newspaper—our dull daily. But these, I take it, you intend to include in the new work, or at least such of them as to whose qualities you feel no doubt.

"Let me say in plain honesty, and without any mere wish to please you, that my looking over your poems afresh has served to raise you higher than ever in my mind. The truth of your language, the felici-

ties of phrase, the eye and feeling for nature, the tenderness and exceeding beauty, were always present with me. But I am more than ever before impressed with the *number* of the pieces that ascend into grandeur of thought, into the *higher* order of powers; these higher qualities are not even mere instances of only occasional states of mind in which one comes, but show that they have their due proportions in the structure of that mind, giving to it a massive grandeur."

A few days later (February 1st) Mr. Dana added:

"DEAR BRYANT: I sent you by express last Monday my minutes upon your poems, and trust that the packet reached you all in good time. I hope you will not set me down for a hard-judging, hard-hearted, fault-finding critic, as I was only endeavoring to comply with what I supposed to be your object in asking me to point out what I least liked. I believe I did not say it in my letter, and, lest I did not, I say it now, that all along I spoke in the way of *comparison* with your other pieces, for there is always something in what you write, however inferior it may be to others of your poems, which breathes of your spirit and is characteristic of your turn of thought and expression. The two poems which I spoke of as leaving a feeling of disappointment ("The Strange Lady" and "The Catterskill Falls," were they?) left that effect from the manner in which they end. There was nothing in them to premonish one that they would not close with somewhat of a climax, if I may so speak. We expect something more; they affect us somewhat, therefore, as leaving off, dropping off, rather than ending—"you understand?" as Sampson Wilder says. But give yourself no concern about their ending, off-leaving, dropping, or stopping, be it which of these it may. Others may not be at all so affected by them. It is that beautifully tender thing, the Mary Magdalen, that has

'—the thing forlorn,
In wonder and in scorn.'

"I advise you not to tamper with it under any attempt to better it; the words do not trouble me, and I should be sorry to see any change, unless you would substitute for the one word 'thing' a word that would satisfy you. And now, my dear sir, let me beg you to leave out none of these pieces; depend upon it, if you do, it will cause a feeling of dissatisfaction, and people will call the edition an incom-

plete edition. 'The White-footed Doe' (am I right in its title?) I read on its first appearance in some newspaper, and thought it most pleasing in conception and execution. My impression is that I spoke of it to you about that time in a letter, and that I suggested, considering its approach in name to 'The White Doe' of Wordsworth, and some resemblance in its mystical spirit, that it might be well, for the sake of taking off the effect of this likeness, to prepare the piece with a slight prose account of its origin, if, indeed, it is grounded on any ancient story."

Mr. Bryant's reply was from New York, April 6th:

"DEAR DANA: I should have written long ago, to thank you for the criticisms you made on my verses, but you know my infirmity. You have treated them far more mercifully than they deserve. In revising them, I have, for the most part, been guided by what you have said, as you will see when the edition comes out.

"It was fully my purpose to prune out some of the poems, but I at length concluded to take your advice and let them all stand—certainly all which appeared in the larger volume. The word 'gushing,' as applied to 'tresses,' I did not see how I could alter, and was glad, therefore, when the reprieve came in another letter.* It was just so with the words 'thing forlorn' in 'Mary Magdalen.' 'Nailed on men the yoke,' etc., has the authority of Gray.† 'And nailed the yoke of mischief on mankind.' I do not understand nailing a yoke on to mean anything more than riveting it—making it fast with nails—clinching it with iron; it does not necessarily mean nailing it *to* the creature that wears it.

"With these exceptions, there is hardly one of your suggestions that I have not followed. On reflection, there is another: 'wisdom disappeared' may not be quite right, but I see no way to alter it.‡

"You cannot think how much obliged to you I am for the trouble you have taken with my book. There is nobody else whom I would have asked to do the same thing. You have shown me faults which I was amazed should have escaped my notice; for example, that passage in 'The Ages' where I talk about vampires and their net. Such

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* In "The Antiquity of Freedom."

† In "The Ages."

‡ In "The Past."

nonsense I could hardly believe I had written, though the whole passage was verbally in my memory. I was much affected by the general good opinion you expressed of my poems, on reading them over with a view to note their faults. I am sure there is no man from whom I should receive the expression of such an opinion with more satisfaction."

Mr. Dana writes again, April 22d:

"I am truly glad that what I have done should prove of any manner of use to you. It is quite delightful to find fault with you, you take it so patiently, thou least sensitive, or, more definitely, least touchy, of poets. I could not help saying, when I ended reading your letters, 'There's no nonsense about Bryant.' I see your reasons for nailing the yoke; and '*nailed*,' with an *emphasis*, I believe, must be allowed to stand. Pray, where in Gray is the line you quote in way of authority? The yoke of mischief by itself seems poor enough; yet I can conceive of the context giving a character to the word *mischief* which would make the line one of force."

In another letter, a few days later (July 25th), Mr. Dana adds:

"By the way, in reading over 'The Crowded Street,' the last line struck me as a falling off. I remember that it did so the first time I saw the piece. 'That rolls to its predestined end.'* I have no doubt that *predestined* may be used with effect, and poetically, but here it strikes me as prosaic, with a theological, rather than a poetical, flavor. If not too late, I wish you would alter it, if you can do so, to your mind. Such a piece of poetry is richly worthy a good 'leave off,' but, as I have many times said, do nothing against your own convictions. In 'The Return of Youth,' pray change 'Thy tongue was prompt the generous thought to speak.' It made me feel as if the Cumberlands and Haleys had come back to sear the fresh green of earth again. How came it there? It must have been a stray left behind when you cleared your part of Parnassus of the sheep that got in there in your youth from Pope's Pastorals. . . ."

"AUGUST 15th: Where do you find that absence of exaggera-

* It is now "appointed" end.

tion and that beautiful calm which so mark all you write? which are felt alike in your 'Walk at Sunset' and your terrible 'Hurricane'? . . . . No fun in criticising you, you take it all in so Christian a spirit. What use in finding fault with a fellow-creature if he won't flare up at it? I trust that you made no changes without being first fully convinced in your own mind that they were for the best."

Mr. Bryant spent his usual vacation in a visit to his mother and brothers in Illinois. He went there by way of Buffalo and the Lakes, stopping at Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago, which he described as young and thriving towns, destined to a great future. In crossing the prairie from Chicago to Princeton he met with the mishap of an upset of the coach, which might have been serious, but was only annoying.

"A violent rain," he says, "fell in the course of the morning; the coach was heavily loaded—nine passengers within and three without, besides the driver; the day was hot, and the horses dragged us slowly through the black mud, which seemed to possess the consistency and tenacity of sticking-plaster. A little before sunset, having travelled somewhat less than fifty miles, we were about to cross the channel of the Illinois canal for the second or third time. There had once been a bridge at the crossing-place, but the water had risen in the canal, and the timbers and planks had floated away, leaving only the stones which formed its foundation. In attempting to ford the channel, the blundering driver came too near the bridge; the coach-wheels on one side rose upon the stones, and on the other sank deep into the mud, and we were overturned in an instant. The outside passengers were pitched head foremost into the canal, and four of those within were lying under water. We extricated ourselves as well as we could; the men waded out, the women were carried, and when we got out it was found that, although drenched with water and plashed with mud, nobody was either drowned or hurt. A farm-wagon, passing at the moment, forded the canal without the least difficulty, and, taking the female passengers, conveyed them to the next farm-house, about a mile distant. We got out the baggage, which was completely soaked, set up the carriage on its wheels, doing which we had to stand waist-high in the mud, and reached the hospitable farm-house about half past nine o'clock. Its owner was an emigrant from Kinderhook, on

the Hudson, who claimed to be a Dutchman and a Christian, and I have no reason to doubt that he was either. His kind family made us free of their house, and we passed the night in drying ourselves and in getting our baggage ready to proceed the next day."

He passed but a week with his relatives, making excursions to various points of interest on the prairies, and remarking how, since his last visit in 1841, the whole face of the country had been improved by the substitution of frame and brick houses for log-cabins, and neatly trimmed orchards for the open waste; and then he returned by the Sault St. Marie and Mackinaw, which he found wonderfully beautiful, and where he mingled with remnants of the Indian tribes that still lingered on the outskirts of civilization.

His book was now going through the press, but it seems that he was anything but satisfied with the proposed illustrations. In September (25th) he wrote to Mr. Dana about them in this wise:

"You ask at what time my poems will be out. The proofs have all been corrected, and I suppose the pages have been stereotyped and the pressman is at work by this time. But the designer and engraver are, I fear, slow in their tasks. I grow fastidious in regard to illustrations; there is scarcely one in a score, in the books of poetry that I take up, which does not displease me. I have seen eight of those intended for my book, and, with one or two exceptions, cannot say I take much delight in them. I have now ceased to inquire what progress they are making in getting out the book. The booksellers have charge of everything but the text, and if they make an ugly thing of it, or if the book comes out late, their interest suffers quite as much as mine; and, as I can do nothing to prevent either of these results, I give myself no trouble about the matter, and think of something else. One of the Cheneys came to New York and took a very fine crayon likeness of me, and his brother engraved it. I think this will be the best thing in the book. I think very well of the talents of Leutze, who makes the designs; but what can be expected of an artist who works to order in that way? What sort of verses should I make if I were to sit down to put his pictures into verse? Worse than I

make now, I fear. While everybody is saying that you are busy in writing the Life of Allston, how has it happened that no allusion has ever been made to that fact, either in your letters or mine, nor in our conversations when we have met? Am I such an egotist, and are you so modest? I have thought a thousand times that I would inquire of you, in the very next letter I wrote you, what progress you were making with the work, and when we might expect to see it, but my letters have generally been written in a hurry, and the matter did not come into my mind at the time. Do let us know as much about it, at least, as you allow the rest of the world to know. I thank you again for the pains you have taken with my poems. Your criticisms have been of great service to me. There are a thousand faults that escape a writer—that escape me, at least—in composition, which I yet recognize to be faults the moment they are pointed out to me. There are few, however, who know what faults in poetic composition are. There is no other man whom I would have asked to do what you have done for me. The greater is your merit in going through the job with so good a grace. If I have sometimes neglected to correct the faults you have pointed out, it has been, in most cases, because, though I admitted the objection, I could not satisfy myself with any alteration that occurred to me."

When the book was at length out, Mr. Dana wrote to Mr. Bryant as follows:

"DECEMBER 15th: I have occasionally seen you with the look that the Cheneys have given you, but it is not characteristic of you—at any rate, not your higher self. The younger Cheney is a fine fellow and a good artist, and I can very well see how, under the circumstances, he failed of catching what I miss. . . . But why should I be putting you more out of conceit with what is done? The poetry will stand it. The book is well printed; and, I dare say, the style in which it is got up will be generally taking, and that the end intended will be attained. For my own comfortable reading, I never want anything more than a plain, well-printed book—I want to have my attention drawn off as little as possible by the material medium through which the author's words and thoughts reach me—and this feeling may have made me a little too hard upon the illustrations in your case; so set me down for an old growler, as, in very deed, I believe I am. I did

not tell you in my last, as I intended, how the 'SLOW stars' affect me in your 'Return of Youth.' They seem to come out, one after another, and to go on their shining, silent courses through my spiritual sphere, and to pass off into distant space again. No modern beats you in awakening many and beautiful associations by a single term. There is a perfectness in the meanings which your words give to things."

The unusual care which Mr. Bryant extended to his poems at this time was doubtless owing to the fact that his republication of them was to a certain degree a venture. A new reading public had grown up since the appearance of his earlier editions, and the advent of new poets had introduced other standards of criticism than those by which he had been originally judged. When his first little volume was printed, in 1821, it was like his own 'Yellow Violet'—the first flower of the spring that blossomed

"Beside the snow-bank's edges cold,"

and, for many years thereafter, he had literally no competitors with whom he could be compared. He had, in fact, formed the tastes by which he was judged. As his pieces had gone into nearly all the school-books and compilations of the day, the younger generation of scholars had grown up with a filial reverence for him which was, perhaps, more indulgent than critical. It might be a question, therefore, whether his success was not due as much to the solitude of his position, or to the absence of those with whom he might be contrasted, as to real merit. But now there were other poets capable of engendering poetic tastes and tendencies, if not of a diverse, at least of a different character. A new inspiration, in fact, had been long at work in the poetic literature of both England and the United States. Men of brilliant faculty had arisen to challenge the suffrages of the literary world to other models than those which were supreme at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Keats, in England, had given an impulse to imaginative writing which, confirmed and broadened by Tennyson,

furnished other satisfactions than Wordsworth or Byron presented. In our own country, Emerson, who had already captured the world as a philosopher, was proving himself as great a poet as he was a thinker. Mr. Longfellow was charming the public ear, as Mr. Bryant told him, by the music he had poured into passages of the great drama of life; the Tyrtæan strains of Whittier, Quaker though he was, were appealing to the deepest moral emotions of the nation; the wonderfully weird power of Poe was beginning to be felt, and others, younger still, like Lowell, were adding a variety, freshness, and volume to the notes of their lyres, which indicated the dawn of a new poetic day. In the flush and dazzle of this dawn there were some that supposed the older stars would fade out of sight. It was to them that Poe addressed himself when he said, "It will never do to claim for Bryant a genius of the highest order; but there has been latterly a growing disposition to deny him genius in any respect. He is now commonly spoken of as 'a man of high poetical talent, very correct, with a warm appreciation of the beauty of nature, and great descriptive powers, but rather too much of the old-school manner of Cowper, Goldsmith, and Young.' This is the truth, but not the whole truth. Mr. Bryant has genius, and that of a marked character; but it has been overlooked by modern schools because different in those externals which have become in a measure symbolical of those schools." *

Mr. Bryant was of the generation to which he belonged,

* Poe expresses elsewhere a much higher sense of Mr. Bryant's genius than is given in this passage, and for his character always exhibited, and doubtless felt, the profoundest respect. "His soul is charity itself—in all respects generous and noble" (Poe's Works, vol. iii, p. 188). They never, however, had much intercourse. Poe's life was altogether too erratic to attract Mr. Bryant's regard; but I once saw them together at an evening party, given by Mrs. C. M. Kirkland, when they talked with each other for a long time. Poe was slim in person, neatly dressed, clean shaven, with a large head, dark hair, and the most wonderfully luminous eyes. Mr. Bryant was not so slight, but his head was also large, and he wore a venerable white beard. Poe approached him as some Grecian youth might be imagined to approach an image of Plato—with a look and attitude full of the profoundest reverence; and during the whole time of their conversation he preserved this expression.

and what he was at the outset he remained through all the fluctuations of literary taste. By nature serious, earnest, meditative, his manner would have been essentially the same in any age; he could not have escaped, if he had been inclined, from the impress which his nature had given his productions. Education might have influenced his choice of topics and of metres to a small degree, but no external influences, different from those to which he was subject, would have modified the structure of his verse. He knew, moreover, perfectly well, his own powers and his own limitations, and was, therefore, never tempted to go outside of the sphere in which he had achieved success. Recognizing the splendor, the novelty, the magic of later writers, both at home and abroad, he still faithfully adhered to simpler and less dazzling methods. There were tendencies, indeed, in the later schools of poetry, which he fancied might easily lead them into a deplorable degeneracy. One of these tendencies was to be seen in the desire to excite surprise by striking novelties or niceties of phrase, which might readily run into excessive technicality and refinement, or a mere meaningless luxuriance of imagery; and another was shown in an ambition for subtleties of thought and allusion which were not far from obscurity, and in a repulsively abstruse affectation of meaning where there was no meaning. How far Browning, Rossetti, Swinburne, and others may have justified these fears, it is for the critics of literature to say; but certainly Mr. Bryant kept steadily aloof from either, holding in the end, as he did in the beginning, that "the best poetry—that which takes the strongest hold of the general mind, not in one age only, but in all ages—is that which is always simple and always luminous." "Its elements," he once said, "lie in natural objects, in the vicissitudes of human life, in the emotions of the human heart, and in the relations of man to man," and "he who can present them in combinations and lights, which at once affect the mind with a deep sense of their truth and beauty, is the poet" for mankind.*

* Introduction to a "Library of Poetry and Song."

Was it not a proof of the general correctness of his theory and practice of verse that, amidst the brilliancies, whether inferior or superior, which cast their cursory lights over the world, his little pieces continued to shine with an undiminished lustre? At any rate, the new edition of 1845–'46 was received by his countrymen and the critics with no apparent abatement of favor; he had entered so deeply into the innermost sanctuaries of all hearts to whom poetry is a life, that he could not be displaced; others might create a profounder or broader admiration, but in the sphere he occupied he was permanently fixed.* He had few warmer admirers than his contemporaries, eminent in the same intellectual line. Mr. Emerson, in a letter of introduction to him, given to a distinguished English friend, said: "He wants to know the best in our literature, and that, I take it, means you." And in illustration let me quote the following letters, to show the friendly relations which subsisted between Mr. Bryant and Mr. Longfellow, whose poems were comprised in the Philadelphia illustrated series. As soon as they appeared, Mr. Bryant wrote him as follows:

"NEW YORK, *January* 21, 1846.

"MY DEAR SIR: I have been looking over the collection of your poems recently published by Cary & Hart, with Huntington's illustrations. They appear to me more beautiful than on former readings, much as I then admired them. The exquisite music of your verses dwells more agreeably than ever on my ear, and more than ever am I affected by their depth of feeling and their spirituality, and the creative power with which they set before us passages from the great

* Mr. Rogers acknowledged the receipt of the edition of 1844 as follows:

"ST. JAMES'S PLACE, *June* 24, 1846.

"What can I say to you—how can I thank you for the very beautiful volume which I have just received? I can only say what I have said before. But, having now seen you, which I had so long wished to do, I can now read it in your voice and with your countenance before me. Pray remember me very affectionately to one I have never seen—to one I *must* love, from what I have read about her. May we meet—if not here, elsewhere! and may you long enjoy the society of one another in this world—very long after I have left it."

drama of life. I had been reading aloud to my wife some of your poems that pleased me most, and she would not be content till I had written to express to you something of the admiration which I could not help manifesting as I read them. I am not one of those who believe that a true poet is insensible to the excellence of his writings, and know that you can well afford to dispense with such slight corroboration as the general judgment in your favor could derive from any opinion of mine. You must allow me, however, to add my voice to the many which make up the sum of poetic fame.

"Yours truly,

"W. C. BRYANT."

To this Mr. Longfellow replied as follows:

"CAMBRIDGE, *February* 5, 1846.

"MY DEAR SIR: I am very much obliged to you for your friendly letter, which has given me, I assure you, the sincerest pleasure. Your expressions of praise and sympathy are very valuable to me; and I heartily thank Mrs. Bryant for prompting your busy hand to write.

"In return, let me say what a staunch friend and admirer of yours I have been from the beginning, and acknowledge how much I owe to you, not only of delight, but of culture. When I look back upon my earlier years, I cannot but smile to see how much in them is really yours. It was an involuntary imitation, which I most readily confess, and say, as Dante says to Virgil:

"'Tu se lo mia maestro e il mio autora.'

"I am sorry to send you bad news of your old friend William Ware. He is now here in Cambridge; and has been for some months, to all appearances, rapidly recovering from his paralytic stroke. But a few days ago he had another attack, slight in comparison with the former, yet enough to fill the hearts of his friends with gloomy forebodings. Perhaps it would be well to say little about it, for I do not exactly know how severe it was; but, knowing your interest in his welfare, I thought I would mention it.

"With kind remembrances to your wife, to Julia, and the Godwins, Faithfully yours,

"HENRY W. LONGFELLOW."*

* It may also be noticed here that, a year or two later, when Mr. Longfellow's

A heated political contest was closed in November of this year by an overwhelming defeat of the Democrats, to which Mr. Bryant alludes in a playful way in a letter to Dr. Dewey, who had removed to Washington, D. C.:

"NEW YORK, *November* 17, 1846.

"DEAR DOMINIE: I hope that is familiar enough to satisfy you, and it is respectful, too, at least the initials are so, for they make D. D., which, as theology is the highest of sciences, is, of course, the

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"Evangeline" was published, Mr. Bryant commended it heartily in his journal, and Mr. Longfellow acknowledged the good opinion in this way:

"CAMBRIDGE, *January* 3, 1848.

"MY DEAR BRYANT: I ought sooner to have thanked you for the very cordial reception you gave my poem, and the warm and friendly words you said of it in your paper. But, to tell the truth, it is rather awkward to thank a friend for praising one, however grateful we may feel; for it looks a little like the recognition of the justice of the praise bestowed.

"Nevertheless, laying aside all modesty, real or imaginary, I very sincerely thank you for your generous recommendation of my book, and for warding off so dexterously the thrust aimed at it by the 'Knickerbocker.'

"Your first notice I never saw. But the suggestion made in it (as I have been told) touching the foliage of trees in the 'Indian Summer,' is undoubtedly true, fixing the date of that season about the first of November. By poetic license, perhaps not warrantable, I brought it a little earlier, so as to give the name to any of the warm, hazy days in October.

"With kindest regards and best wishes to Mrs. Bryant and Julia, in which my wife joins me, Sincerely yours,

"HENRY W. LONGFELLOW."

Mr. Dana thought that Mr. Bryant had spoken too well of "Evangeline," and Mr. Bryant justified his criticism:

"I did not, I am sure, make any such comparison of Longfellow's 'Evangeline' with other American poems as you have ascribed to me. What I said was, that it had given me altogether more pleasure in the reading than any poem which had lately appeared—than any poem which had been published within several years. And this is true. I have never made any attempt to analyze the sources of this pleasure. The poem interested and affected me strangely. Whatever may be said of the parts, they are all harmonized by a poetic feeling of great sweetness and gentleness which belongs to the author. My ear admits, nay, delights in, the melody of the hexameter as he has managed it. I no doubt expressed my satisfaction with the poem in warm terms, but the idea of bringing its poetic merits into comparison with whatever had been written in America never entered into my head."

highest of honors. My wife and I were very much amused with your letter; it was as if you had fairly shaken off all care when you left New York, and, like a colt just turned into

'—fresh fields and pastures new,'

were taking a good frisk about the premises before settling yourself to anything serious. May the old fellow—Care, I mean—the same who, according to the proverb, killed a cat with its nine lives, fail to overtake you in your new abode; or, if he should, may you, in doubling to come back where you ought to be, throw him off the track, and leave him behind forever. . . . How could you mention the word politics? You boast in the postscript that you have written a letter without a word of politics; but that very word politics has spoiled all. What if you should pay a visit—a parochial visit, let us suppose—to a gentleman whose son has been unfortunately hanged the week before, and, just as you were taking your leave, should tell him, as a proof of your considerate forbearance, and delicate beyond the ordinary standard of good breeding, that in your whole conversation you have not said a syllable about halters. You know very well that we Democrats of the State of New York have been beaten in the late election—beaten small, ground to powder in the strife of politics, and yet you mention the very word that revives all our sorrows. Pray leave us a little space alone with our grief. Respect the sacred anguish of those who are smitten with a recent calamity. Have you not yet learned that on such occasions silence is the most expressive token of sympathy? It is ill tickling a green wound, as any surgeon will tell you.

"There! I have written you a letter made up of nothing. A whipped syllabub, baked dry to prevent a collapse. I hope it will suffer no damage on its way to Washington. It is a strange thing for me to write a letter when I have nothing to communicate. It seems as sheer a waste of time as reading a novel. The news of New York —the small news I mean—which does not find its way into the newspapers, you doubtless have had from other correspondents. Perhaps they have not told you that in this region the skies have wept ever since the unfortunate issue of the late election. 'Sad drops,' as Milton calls them, shed almost without intermission; a fortnight's storm, with the sourest of east winds. I have been, and am, at my place on Long Island, planting and transplanting trees, in the mist;

sixty or seventy; some for shade; most for fruit. Hereafter, men, whose existence is at present merely possible, will gather pears from the trees which I have set in the ground, and wonder what old *covey*—for in those days the slang terms of the present time, by the ordinary process of change in languages, will have become classical—what old *covey* of past ages planted them? Or they will walk in the shade of the mulberry, apricot, and cherry-trees that I have set in a row beside a green lane, and think, if they think at all about the matter—for who can tell what the great-grandchildren of ours will think about—that they sprang up of themselves by the way." *

* These thoughts were about the same time expressed in his poem, "The Planting of the Apple-Tree," published some four or five years afterward in the "Atlantic Monthly."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH.

RISE OF THE FREE-SOIL PARTY.

A. D. 1847–1848.

THE forces under General Taylor, which had been ordered to the left bank of the Rio Grande, were soon involved in hostilities with the Mexican forces under Generals Ampudia and Arista. Rapid movements on the part of the latter seriously endangered the army of Taylor, who called upon the Government for assistance. No war had been declared, and yet war actually existed; and Congress, whatever its feelings might have been in regard to the origin or justice of the conflict, was compelled to vote money and troops, merely to assure the safety of our soldiers. War was, therefore, no longer a matter of legislative discretion. It had been begun in the field, and must be sustained in the Cabinet.* The slave-holders, having succeeded in their scheme for acquiring Texas, were confidently looking forward to other acquisitions. Many of the free States remonstrated with much vehemence against their purposes, knowing that all their conquests of territories were destined to enlarge the area of slavery. Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, Michigan, and other States proclaimed, in decided words, their utter and eternal opposition to the extension of that baleful wrong. But their protests had little immediate effect. Wars, unhappily, excite patriotic passions which render them popular without regard to

* It was not formally declared till May, in 1846.

their aims, or even the spirit in which they are conducted. The Mexican war became particularly popular with our young men, to whom war of any kind was a novelty, addressing their love of enterprise and adventure with a strange and powerful seduction. It was, indeed, for a while, impossible for anybody, however cool or restrained his temperament, to resist the horrid charms which gathered about the marches and battles of our troops. General Taylor's brilliant advance from the Rio Grande to Cerro Gordo, and General Scott's still more magnificent movement from Vera Cruz to the "Halls of the Montezumas"—in sight of the majestic mountains of the Andean range, whose towns were taken and fortresses stormed—captivated the imaginations of all of us by their combined splendor and romance, and we flung up our hats at each report of victory, without thinking of the cost at which it was achieved, or caring for the results. For the South, the war was a triumph; it had at length accomplished its purposes; slavery was seemingly secured forever, and the field of its future empire was about to be stretched to the Pacific.

It was hardly practicable at the outset for Mr. Bryant, and others, who, like him, detested the objects of the war, to oppose it directly, but they could look with a close eye into the supplies voted or the loans contracted in support of it; they could insist upon the earliest termination of it, and, above all, they could organize opinion against the introduction of slavery into the regions about to be obtained by our arms. When, therefore, it was moved in Congress, by Mr. Wilmot, of Pennsylvania, as an amendment to an appropriation bill, that slavery should be prohibited in all new acquisitions of territory, he lent the proviso an enthusiastic approval. As the question was more and more earnestly discussed, it became more and more evident that the real objects of the war had been to introduce new slave States into the Union, and the opposition to it grew wider and stronger, until it formed itself, as we shall see, into a formidable political party.

During the visit which Mr. Bryant made in Illinois, in 1846, he saw his venerable mother for the last time; she died in May of 1847, in the eightieth year of her age. Writing to his brother John of the event, May 26th, he said:

"It is a mitigation of the calamity to think she was spared to us so long; that her life was blameless and useful; and that, although some of her last days were embittered by physical suffering, she was always satisfied with the lot assigned her by Providence. To have lived in benevolent work and contentment, and, for the most part, in health, the full number of years allotted to the human race, may be accounted as singularly fortunate. We have reason to be grateful that such was the case with our mother. . . ."

In the little poem, beginning, "The May sun sheds an amber light," suggested by this loss, he refers to her as "the gentle and the good, who once cropped the white blossoms of the spring with a fairer hand, and who had taught him to listen to the song of birds in a voice much sweeter than their own"; and he adds:

"That music of the early year
Brings tears of anguish to my eyes.
My heart aches when the flowers appear,
For then I think of her who lies
Within her grave,
Low in her grave."

Miss Sedgwick was at this time one of the guests at Roslyn, who, writing to a niece at Boston (May 30th), took occasion to describe the place of her temporary sojourn:

"Do you wonder," she asks, "where I am? In the guest-chamber of a generous, old-fashioned house, behind one of the massy pillars that support a piazza which surrounds it, in front of Hempstead Bay, a deep cut into Long Island from the Sound, of which and its ever passing home-fleets there is a distant view; with a terraced garden descending to the water on one side, and a pond on the other, formed from the springs that descend from steep acclivities; with a little strip of land between it and a green ravine, like that which separates the

Salisbury lakes, along which there is a lovely shaded walk and a rural bridge to the cottage (*ornée*) of the daughter of my host; well-grown trees hugging the old house, and lovely branches of light spring foliage floating round dark, solid pines. Little villages in the distance, with all pleasant signs of habitancy. But better than any out-door life, nobler gifts of God than hill-sides and their rich borderings of trees, clear streams and bays, are those we have within, and delightfully we have spent the day, though it has been cloudy and dripping."

Mr. Bryant's summer trip this year was directed to the vicinity of Boston, where he met many of his early friends, but was unfortunate in missing one of the earliest and dearest of all, Mr. Dana. He went from Boston to Portland, and thence up the Kennebec to Augusta, and from Augusta across to the White Mountains, which he had before seen only at a distance, but which he now explored, ascending Mount Washington, and passing a few days in the Franconia Notch. On the way from Boston he remarked the beginnings of a city which has since grown into noticeable dimensions:

"At North Andover, we came in sight of the roofs and spires of the new city of Lawrence, which already begins to show proudly on the sandy and sterile banks of the Merrimac, a rapid and shallow river. A year ago last February, the building of the city was begun; it has now five or six thousand inhabitants, and new colonists are daily thronging in. Brickkilns are smoking all over the country, to supply materials for the walls of the dwellings. The place, I was told, astonishes visitors with its bustle and confusion. The streets are encumbered with heaps of fresh earth, and piles of stone, brick, beams, and boards, and people can with difficulty hear each other speak, for the constant thundering of hammers, and the shouts of cartmen and wagoners urging their oxen and horses with their loads through the deep sand of the ways. 'Before the last shower,' said a passenger, 'you could hardly see the city from this spot, on account of the cloud of dust that hung perpetually over it.' 'Rome,' says the old adage, 'was not built in a day,' but here is a city which, in respect of its growth, puts Rome to shame. The Romulus of this new city, who, like the Latian of old, gives his name to the community of which

he is the founder, is Mr. Abbot Lawrence, of Boston, a rich manufacturer, money-making and munificent, and more fortunate in building cities and endowing schools than in foretelling political events. He is the modern Amphion, to the sound of whose music—the pleasant chink of dollars gathered in many a goodly dividend—all the stones which form the foundation of this Thebes dance into their places,

'And half the mountain rolls into a wall.'"

Of the White Mountains themselves he had this to say:

"The scenery of these mountains has not been sufficiently praised. But for the glaciers, but for the peaks white with perpetual snow, it would be scarcely worth while to see Switzerland after seeing the White Mountains. The depth of the valleys, the steepness of the mountain-sides, the variety of aspect shown by their summits, the deep gulfs of forest below, seamed with the open courses of rivers, the vast extent of the mountain region seen north and south of us, gleaming with many lakes, filled me with surprise and astonishment. Imagine the forests to be shorn from half the broad declivities—imagine scattered habitations on the thick green turf and foot-paths leading from one to the other, and herds and flocks browsing, and you have Switzerland before you. I admit, however, that these accessories add to the variety and interest of the landscape, and perhaps heighten the idea of its vastness.

"I have been told, however, that the White Mountains in autumn present an aspect more glorious than even the splendors of the perpetual ice of the Alps. All this mighty multitude of mountains, rising from valleys filled with dense forests, have then put on their hues of gold and scarlet, and, seen more distinctly on account of their brightness of color, seem to tower higher in the clear blue of the sky. At that season of the year they are little visited, and only awaken the wonder of the occasional traveller.

"It is not necessary to ascend Mount Washington to enjoy the finest views. Some of the lower peaks offer grander though not so extensive ones; the height of the main summit seems to diminish the size of the objects beheld from it. The sense of solitude and immensity is, however, most strongly felt on that great cone, overlooking all the rest, and formed of loose rocks, which seem as if broken into

fragments by the power which upheaved these ridges from the depths of the earth below."

The ensuing winter was very much saddened for Mr. Bryant by reports of the severe illness of the friend with whom he had enjoyed so many delightful rambles among the Catskills—Thomas Cole, the artist—who lingered till some time in the month of February, 1848, when he died. Dr. Dewey, speaking of the event in a letter to Mr. Bryant, says: "The thought that Cole is gone comes over me many times a day, and I draw my breath hard, almost with gasping, as if some dread chasm suddenly opened itself before me. Can he be gone? It seems as if he belonged to the earth and sky, to the serene day, the lovely sunset, the living verdure, the soft, warm, breathing air, not to the grave. He was a son of the morning! how he painted its cool, fresh, flushing glow, as it rose over the dark mountains!" "Ought there not," Mr. Dewey asks in closing, "to be some notice of this event in New York?" But the artists of the Academy of Design, anticipating his suggestion, had already invited Mr. Bryant to deliver a eulogy on their lamented fellow. It was spoken (May 4, 1848) to a crowded and sympathizing audience, and listened to with the profoundest attention. Mr. Bryant's ardent attachment to the friend doubtless heightened his appreciation of the artist, and his portrait was drawn in the tenderest colors. The close of the address was much admired.

"We might imagine," he said, "a sound of lament for him whom we have lost in the swell of the streams and in the sighs of the wind among the grass, and an aspect of sorrow in earth's solitary places! We might dream that the conscious valleys miss his accustomed visits, and that the autumnal glories of the woods are paler because of his departure. . . . The region of the Catskills, where he wandered and studied and sketched, and wrought his sketches into such glorious creations, is saddened by a desolate feeling when we behold it and think of it. The mind that we knew was abroad in those scenes

of grandeur and beauty, and which gave them a higher interest in our eyes, has passed from the earth, and we see that something of power and greatness is withdrawn from the sublime mountain-tops and the broad forests and the rushing waterfalls."

Sending a copy of this address, when it was printed, to Mr. Dana, he accompanied it with an invitation to Roslyn (April 8, 1848). He said:

"I only wish we had something grand and savage to show you at our place, in the way of rocks and ocean waves; but we have none; our harbor is as quiet as a mill-pond, and our hills are heaps of loam and gravel. Yet you shall see wide views of land and water, and long tracts of woodland from the hill-sides; and you shall see sails on the Sound, and gushing springs near you, and sheets of sweet water close to the salt sea, with dark cedars on the dikes between them. So you will come, and tell your sister that we shall expect her also. And, when you come, you are not to make melancholy faces at the news from Europe.*

"That earth is to become a paradise in consequence of any political changes that may or can be made, I do not believe; but I believe it to be in the order of Providence that republican institutions will come in with a higher and more general civilization, and that their effect is good and wholesome. I agree with you as to the virtue of obedience to the civil magistrate; but we must find some way of cultivating it under a popular government, or I fear it will be almost banished from the world in the next century. I think I could show that the feelings of loyalty may be as strong, and more general, among the subjects of such a government than in a monarchy—at least, as the world now goes.† I am sure you will agree with me that no other obedience can be a virtue but that which is cheerful and voluntary, and that a discontented submission, enforced by a standing army, is a bad discipline for the public morals.

"As to what is going on in France, I confess I am not without my apprehensions; but I am of a more hopeful temperament, I believe, than you are, and my hopes predominate. There is my Roland for

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* The outbreak of the Revolution in France.

† How strongly was this sentiment confirmed at the outbreak of our civil war.

your Oliver—politics for politics—but I do not often retaliate in that way. If you will come to Roslyn you shall talk as long as you please about loyalty and obedience, and the higher rule symbolized in earthly governments, and I will agree to at least half of what you say.

"The robins are already whistling to their mates; the willows began to show green sprays several days since; the lilacs are putting out their leaves, and country housewives have begun their house-cleaning. Let me know what time we may expect you, by letter a few days before you come, that I may not be out of the way. I will use my interest with the fruit-trees in my neighborhood to have them in their holiday dresses when you arrive."

Mr. Dana did not reply till the 23d of June:

"I hope you did not draw the conclusion, because I did not write you about your Address, that, therefore, I did not like it. It struck me that the two comparisons at the close of your first paragraph savored a little too much of the over-strong as a setting out. I should not have thought so, perhaps, had they come from any one else, but they did not seem *there* in perfect harmony with what characterizes your prose style. Prescott says, speaking of you: 'I think him a very great artist. Frequently in his editorials I see the same qualities that mark his poetry, the peculiar stillness of great passions not merely controlled, but utterly vanquished, and the power of making common epithets tell.' Now, this is well said and truly applied."

Mr. Rogers, writing at a later date, from St. James's Place (November 12th), was more enthusiastic:

"My dear Mr. Bryant: What return can I make to you for so beautiful, so affecting a tribute to the genius and the character of one in whose conversation I took great pleasure, and to whom I am indebted for a relic which you have doubled in value?

"At my age I cannot hope to see you again on this side of the grave; but as long as I remain here I can pass many a pleasant, many a delightful hour with you, though the Atlantic rolls between us; and, when I am gone—as in a year or two, if not sooner, I must be—you will always, I am sure, speak of me kindly.

"Pray present my respects to your partner in life. Though we

have never met, I know her well. Described as she is by you in 'The Future Life,' I think I could single her out from among a thousand.

"SAMUEL ROGERS."

To Mr. Dana's letter Mr. Bryant replied (September 12th) as follows:

"I am glad that you have spoken so frankly of what I said in my funeral oration concerning Cole. It was written in very sincere and deep grief for his loss; I did not stop to measure my phrases. What I said of his works, however, I said with the more freedom, because, for the most part, it agrees, as I have reason to believe, with the opinion which our best artists have of them—Durand, for example, who has a strong feeling of what is excellent in his art, and great generosity and impartiality in his judgments concerning the works of his contemporaries. What you say of Cole's allegorical turn would be true if he were allegorical in the usual cold, mechanical way. Spenser was allegorical, but a great poet, nevertheless, and greatest in his allegories. Cole's personal character was all that you suppose it to be—most gentle, amiable, affectionate, essentially benevolent, without any of the fashionable ostentation of benevolence.* You have much to say of Mr. P., of whom I think very well in many respects, but who has some peculiarities in his character which show it, perhaps, not to be quite a healthy one. I shall be glad to be useful to him in any

* One of the noticeable incidents connected with the address on Cole was the presentation to Mr. Bryant of a picture, commemorating the intercourse of poet and artist. Mr. Jonathan Sturges, an opulent and cultivated merchant of New York, had commissioned Mr. A. B. Durand to paint one of the grandest of the cloves of the Catskills, with Bryant and Cole standing upon a cliff in the foreground and overlooking the scene. The landscape was in the best style of Mr. Durand's art, and the figures were good portraits, recalling the persons to all who had known them. In presenting the picture, Mr. Sturges wrote as follows:

"MY DEAR SIR: Soon after you delivered your oration on the life and death of our lamented friend Cole, I requested Mr. Durand to paint a picture in which he should associate our departed friend and yourself as kindred spirits. I think the design, as well as the execution, will meet your approbation, and I hope that you will accept the picture from me as a token of gratitude for the labor of love performed on that occasion.

Very truly yours,

"JON. STURGES."

way; but how can you, who know me, ask me to *get* acquainted with anybody? I do not know that I ever got acquainted with anybody of set purpose in my life. The three things most irksome to me in my transactions with the world are, to owe money, to ask a favor, and to seek an acquaintance. The few excellent friends I have I acquired I scarcely know how—certainly not by any assiduity of my own.* Cary & Hart have done for my poems nearly what you suggest; they have published them in a cheap form—a duodecimo volume, the engravings left out, and the black lines taken off; and it is an ugly book after all. If I were a bookseller I would do myself justice. I console myself with thinking that it is not always the best books which are got up in the handsomest manner.

"When I was in London, an acquaintance invited me to dine at

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* Two acquaintances, made in the course of this year, were, in some degree, a compensation for the loss of Cole. The first of these was Mr. A. J. Downing, the architect and landscape gardener, whose early books Mr. Bryant had taken great pleasure in commending to the public, and whose horticultural tastes he shared. He was not, however, long permitted to enjoy this friendship. He saw Mr. Downing once or twice in his beautiful home on the Hudson, and ascended, in company with him, some of the highlands in the neighborhood of Newburg, when the terrible accident occurred which deprived the country of one of its most promising and useful men of genius. (*a*) The other acquisition of a new friendship to which I allude was that of Samuel H. Dickson, a distinguished physician of South Carolina, who had recently taken up his residence in New York. Introduced by Dr. Gilman, the Unitarian clergyman of Charleston, as "a gentleman simple in manner, of boundless knowledge, ardent and communicative, and a most devoted Unitarian," he proved, indeed, to be all that was promised. To the courtly grace and polish of the old-style Southern gentleman, Dr. Dickson added the rarest culture in science, literature, and art. His conversation was varied and brilliant to a degree that could hardly be surpassed. He seemed to be familiar with everything that had been written on every topic, and he had such facility in communicating his information that young and old were alike arrested by the charms of his speech. Disagreeing with Mr. Bryant in political opinion, as a warm-hearted Southerner of those days might be expected to disagree, their intercourse, which lasted through many years, was yet marked by the utmost harmony and a hearty reciprocation of admiration and esteem. (*b*)

(*a*) He was lost in the burning of the steamer Henry Clay, on the Hudson River.

(*b*) Dr. Dickson was for some time a professor of the Medical College in New York, afterward in the University of Pennsylvania, and the author, not only of several professional books of high character, but of a very pleasant little treatise on "Sleep and Dreams."

Mullan's Hotel, in the city. I went, and found, lying in the room where we dined, a superb octavo, got up in the finest style of the London poets, with elegant engravings, the poems of our host himself, Mr. Mullan, or Mullen, for I do not recollect which; I beg his pardon, being uncertain how to spell the name of so great a poet. I could not read the verses, and so it is not strange that I should not be quite accurate in giving the name."

Our armies in Mexico, by a series of brilliant victories, had defeated their foes, taken possession of forts and towns, on both the Atlantic and Pacific, and occupied the capital. A treaty of peace was negotiated, which ceded to the United States vast provinces extending for hundreds of miles along the shores of the Pacific, and reaching back over the mountains to the frontiers of Texas. In a part of this domain, called California, the settlers had already overthrown the provincial government and proclaimed their independence. Emigrants began to rush thither, on a rumor of the secret discovery of gold, at an early day, and these emigrants, mostly from the United States, soon formed themselves into a Territory, and demanded admission to the Union. Instantly the question of the social and political constitutions of these new districts assumed a tremendous importance. Were they to be given up to slavery, or retained to freedom? Passions of the fiercest sort, political ambition, personal avarice, sectional jealousy and hatred, were likely to be enlisted in the conflict, and, as a presidential election was at hand, the party movements would be more or less determined by this predominant issue. It is worthy of note that, in the beginning of the year (1848), Mr. Bryant did not contemplate any reconstruction of parties, and declared himself opposed to it. In a letter to his brother John, of February 7th, he spoke as follows:

"It is difficult to give any answer to your political questions. As matters are now shaping themselves, it seems very probable that Clay will be the Whig candidate. Taylor's claims will come before the

Whig convention with a pretty warm support from the South, but Clay understands better how to manage a convention than anybody on Taylor's side, and I think he will carry the day. Whom the Democrats will agree upon I cannot imagine. Cass has been brought forward too early, and will be killed off before the convention meets.* We of New York—the Democrats of the State I mean—will contend for the measures and principles we think right, let what will come of it. No man pledged against the prohibition of slavery in the territories, or supposed to be hostile to it, will be able to get the vote of the State of New York. Any separate organization, however, would come to nothing. All parties formed for a single measure are necessarily short-lived, and are as much subject to the abuses and vices of party as any other—I have sometimes thought more so. I never mean to belong to any of them unless I see some very strong and compelling reason for it. The journalist who goes into one of these narrow associations gains by it no increase of independence in discussion, while he parts with the greater part of his influence. As to the influence of the administration, it is at this moment very insignificant in New York. It is strongest in the city, where the government patronage is the greatest; but even here it is extremely feeble, and in the country it hardly exists. We are awaiting, as you see, what will grow out of the present state of things with no very sanguine hopes, and very indefinite notions of what the event will be."

He, nevertheless, did not suspect that any considerable political convulsion was near. Writing to Mr. Field, of England, on May 31st, he pointed confidently to the United States as the country of settled political institutions and habits. He said;

"Your brother who brings you this is, morally and physically, a naturalized American, though he may not be politically. He has literally taken root in the soil. His little place, in choosing the site of which I had something to do, is growing fast, with the aid of his English taste—for you English excel all other nations in rural decorations—to be the prettiest spot on Staten Island. His child is

* In all these vaticinations Mr. Bryant was mistaken. Taylor was the candidate of the Whigs, and Cass of the Democrats.

indisputably a Yankee, and his wife, who has been in this country ever since she was a little girl, is not much better. I beg of you not to spoil them with your English verdure, and English cultivation, and English comforts, and your temperate summer weather, so that they will not be contented when they return to their home on this side of the Atlantic. For here, after all, though it sounds strange to say it, is the country to which people must come who desire a stable order of things.

"'He that is low, my friend, fears not to fall.'

Our levelling is done already; Europe has hers yet to do. You nations of the old world are so full of fluctuation and change, putting up and pulling down your institutions! For quiet, and tranquillity, and freedom from troublesome innovations, you must come to the United States.

I have heard to-day concerning poor Audubon, author of that most magnificent work, 'The Birds of America,' and of a work, nearly completed, on the 'Quadrupeds of America,' scarcely less splendid, but which he has been obliged to leave to his sons to finish. My friend, Mr. Leupp, has been out to see him; he found him in a state of mental imbecility, but still in tolerable bodily health and exceedingly active. He was running about from place to place, full of the idea that there was something important for him to do, with plans in his head which he forgot before he could reach the spot where they were to be executed. His sons, meantime, behaved with great composure, paid but little attention to what he was doing, and steadily minded their own business. Well, your old world is the old Audubon—fidgety, uneasy, and uncertain in its projects; and we of the new world are the young Audubons—staid, sober young men, who keep on in the good old track.

"If you should come again to the United States I am afraid you will find it a dull, hum-drum place, with too few political novelties to satisfy men accustomed to the changeful atmosphere of Europe, where they get a revolution as often as in Virginia they take a mint julep. If, however, you should become weary of those excitements, and begin to long for a country that 'continueth in one stay'—a country of stable institutions and a steady course of things—come to America.

"I shall be happy to show my little place on Long Island, where there is plenty of water and trees, without mosquitoes. It is uncommonly beautiful just now; the herbage is very rich, and the vegetation luxuriant this showery season; the horse-chestnuts are just casting their blossoms, and the locust-trees make the whole outlook a wilderness of bloom. We will give you excursions round the harbor, and walks in the woods, and drives all over the country."

Mr. Bryant was so sanguine and sincere in his convictions as to the territorial question that he appears to have supposed for the moment that one or the other of the two great parties would put itself in a proper attitude in respect to it; but in this he was mistaken. They were both in the hands of politicians, who, as usual with politicians, prevaricated and trimmed. The Whig National Convention, held in Philadelphia, June 7th, nominated for the Presidency General Zachary Taylor, a slave-holder, without fixed political opinions, and whose only recommendations were his merits as a soldier, while it was utterly silent as to the great issue of the time. The Democratic National Convention, held at Baltimore, two weeks earlier, nominated Lewis Cass, a recreant to his earlier professions, and a devoted ally of the slave barons. Its declaration of principles was but a repetition of the shuffling and meaningless evasions of former years. How could a conscientious man lend his support to either party, particularly in the State of New York, where parties had been long divided by the question of slavery? In the Democratic party, the dispute had culminated in the formation of two separate organizations—that of the Free Soilers, or Barn-burners, as they were called, and that of the Conservatives, or Hunkers.* Each of these had sent a delegation to Baltimore, where the dispute was not settled, but envenomed. They both returned more

* The meaning of these terms was, that the Barn-burners were so radical that they were willing to burn down their barns to get rid of a few rats, and the Hunkers were such sticklers for old abuses that they would stay at home though it were on fire.

deadly enemies of each other than before. The Barn-burners, with whom Mr. Bryant generally acted, were determined upon an independent movement. He fell in with their plans. In vain the leaders at Washington besought him not to encourage the revolt. Senators Dix and Benton telegraphed and wrote him, begging him to suspend his opinion.

"I feel," said Senator Dix, "great solicitude in respect to the movements of the radical Democracy of New York. You have, undoubtedly, been advised that the opinion of Colonel Benton and Mr. Blair, as well as my own, is adverse to an independent nomination. I see in it nothing but evil to our sound friends. I may be all wrong; and I ought, perhaps, to leave the whole matter to them, without offering an opinion, knowing, as they do, the feeling of the State so much better than myself. I should be very glad to hear from you, and especially to know what is likely to be done."

What was done was the instant publication, in the "Evening Post" and other journals, of a call for a convention of all who were in favor of "Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men," without distinction of party, to start a movement of their own. Joined by liberal Whigs, who could not endure the nominations or the management at Philadelphia, and by the Liberty party, as the Abolitionists, who did not disdain or despair of political means, were called—it met in vast numbers, at Buffalo, in June. It proclaimed the most unmistakable principles of freedom, grandly in contrast with the piddling timidity of the older conventions, and nominated the ex-President, Martin Van Buren, no longer "a Northern man with Southern principles," according to the ancient cries, for its standard-bearer in the campaign. Mr. Bryant entered heart and soul into the revolt, and his journal was, indeed, its most efficient advocate. He caused its power to be felt throughout the nation, as well as in the State, by the pertinency of its arguments and the sharpness of its invective, and, although Van Buren was overwhelmingly defeated at the polls, not carrying a single electoral college, the vote for him

in several of the States was so large that the Free Soil sentiment was thenceforth recognized as a powerful element in public opinion. The campaign brought together, for the first time, the young men of the nation, who had not before been entitled to take part in political life, but who, uncommitted by their prejudices to the ancient parties, were now prepared for the stirring events of the next decade.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH.

JOURNEYS TO CUBA AND EUROPE.

A. D. 1849–1850.

EARLY in 1849, Mr. John Bigelow, a young lawyer of the city, became one of the proprietors and editors of the "Evening Post," and, by his talent, cultivation, and knowledge of politics, added greatly to the strength of the staff.* Obtaining by this aid more leisure than he ever before had, Mr. Bryant was enabled to indulge his restless propensity to travel almost without stint. His first use of the liberty was made in a voyage to Cuba by way of Florida. In March he set sail for Charleston.

"There were two dark-haired, long-limbed gentlemen," he says of his fellow-passengers, "who lay the greater part of the first and second day at full length on the sofas in the after-cabin, each with a spittoon before him, chewing tobacco with great rapidity and industry, and apparently absorbed in the endeavor to fill it within a given time. There was another, with that atrabilious complexion peculiar to marshy countries, who sat on deck, speechless and motionless, wholly indifferent to the sound of the dinner-bell, his countenance fixed in an expression which seemed to indicate an utter disgust of life.

"It was delightful," he goes on to say of his landing in Savannah, "to eyes which had seen only leafless trees and russet fields, to gaze

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* Mr. Bigelow continued to be connected with the journal till 1861, when President Lincoln appointed him Consul-General to France, and subsequently Minister Plenipotentiary.

on the new and delicate green of the shrubs and the herbage. The weeping willows drooped in full leaf, the later oaks were putting forth their new foliage, the locust-trees had hung out their tender sprays and their clusters of blossoms not yet unfolded, the Chinese wistaria covered the sides of houses with its festoons of blue, and roses were nodding at us in the wind from the tops of the brick walls which surround the gardens."

He passed a week on a cotton plantation in the Barnwell district, and another week in Florida, whence he took a steamer for Havana, which he reached on the 7th of April. It was his first visit to a tropical region, and he made the most of his month there in studying its luxuriant vegetation. His diaries contain remarks on the peculiar manners of the Spanish race, the actual working of the system of slavery, and the sentiments of the people as to annexation to the United States, which was then much discussed both in the island and our own country. Letters of introduction enabled him to pass some time on a coffee estate at Matanzas, and afterward on a sugar estate at Los Guines. Returning to Havana, he had an interview with the Governor-General and gained access to some of its best societies, which he observed with great care, not forgetting to attend the theatres, the masked balls, a cock-fight, and even an execution by the garrote. Of the last, he says that "the horror of the spectacle caused me to regret that I made one of a crowd drawn to look at it by an idle curiosity." Slaves were still brought from Africa by the slave dealers, and were almost openly landed on the quays. Many free-born men from Yucatan were also reduced to servitude, under pretended contracts for labor. Contrary to the prevailing impression in the United States, he found that slaves were treated with great harshness and cruelty; they were often killed in cold blood, and the government took no notice of the crime. There was very little feeling in favor of annexation to the United States: the Creoles desired it, because it would relieve them from the burdens imposed upon them by a tyrannical government; but the Spanish population, largely con-

nected with the administration of old Spain, which derived immense revenues from the island, would unwillingly see any change. Nor would the Cubans, he remarked, make any efforts to emancipate themselves by taking up arms. The struggle with the power of Spain would be bloody and uncertain, even if the white population were united, which they were not, and the mutual distrust of the planters and peasantry would make the issue of such an enterprise still more doubtful. The many unsuccessful attempts at revolution, which have since marked the history of the island, would seem to have confirmed this judgment.

Mr. Bryant had scarcely returned to New York when a third journey to Europe was proposed to him, by his former companion and friend, Mr. C. M. Leupp. Ever ready to move, he gladly acquiesced in the proposal, and on the 13th of June they were on the steamer Niagara, bound for Liverpool. Arrived in London, there were few of the usual sights they cared to see, and they devoted their time principally to a study of the picture-galleries. It was at the height of the fashionable season, when, besides the annual exhibition of the Royal Academy, there were a display of water-colors in Pall Mall and a special collection of Etty's best works at the Society of Arts. Mr. Rogers, who received Mr. Bryant very cordially, was kind enough to procure him entrances into many of the finest galleries of private houses, both in London and in the country-seats of the nobility. He also brought him in contact with Eastlake, Leslie, and other distinguished artists. It was on greeting him at this time that Rogers, who had passed his fourscore years, said: "You look hearty and cheerful; but *our* poets seem to be losing their minds. Campbell's son was in the mad-house; and, if the father had been put there during the last years of his life, it would have been the proper place for him. Bowles became weak-minded; and as for Southey, you know what happened to him. Moore was here the other day, and I asked: 'Moore, how long have you been in town?' 'Three or four days,' he replied. 'What,

three or four days, and not let me know it!' 'I beg pardon,' said he, putting his hand to his forehead, 'I believe I came to town this morning.' As to Wordsworth, a gentleman who saw him lately said to me, 'You will not find Wordsworth much changed; he still talks rationally.'"

From London our travellers made a tour to the Orkney and Shetland Islands, going by way of Edinburgh, Perth, Dunkeld, and Wick.* They passed the dark rock of Sumbury Head; behind it, half shrouded in mist, the promontory of Fitfiel Head —Fitful Head, as it is called by Scott in the novel of "The Pirate"—and they climbed the precipice called the Noup of Noss, "a wall of rock six hundred feet in height, descending almost perpendicularly to the sea, which roared and foamed at its base, amid huge masses of rock, and plunged into great caverns hollowed out by the beating of surges for centuries." Midway, and above the reach of the spray, the diary remarks "thousands of sea-birds were hovering and screaming;" and the poet's eye noted "the face of the rock, above which is the haunt of the birds, tapestried with herbage and flowers, which the perpetual moisture keeps always fresh—daisies nodding in the wind, crimson phlox, seeming to set the cliffs in flame, and yellow buttercups and a variety of other plants in bloom," whose names are not given. After exploring the several islands, they returned to Aberdeen, thence to Inverness, and finally to Glenshacken, in Strathglen, where Mr. Bryant was the guest of Mr. Fraser, of Cullwekie, whose estate extended some sixteen miles into the highlands. This furnished him an opportunity of making a pony excursion among the wild glens and hills, where he saw the Highlanders in their own cottages. Passing the lochs of that region, he went to Oban, and took passage in a steamer for Iona and Staffa. Of the latter, his diary simply records: "Looked first at McKinnon's cave; then proceeded to Fingal's Cave; landed at its mouth, and walked in on a row of broken columns of basalt, above the translucent

* See "Sketches of Travel," vol. i.

green waters, reverberating grandly in that vast vault. A sea-fowl was on her nest in the very centre of the arch near the entrance." On his return, through Glasgow and Edinburgh, Mr. Bryant called upon Lord Jeffrey, whom he found ill with bronchitis, but who talked eloquently of "Puseyism, which he said was a fashion—an affectation having no root in any great principle of human nature, appealing neither to mysticism nor rationalism, the two great parties of the religious world—and which, consequently, could only be temporary." In a brief pilgrimage to Melrose and Abbotsford, to honor the memory of Scott, Mr. Bryant was somewhat disappointed—at least at the latter place, where "the fellow at the gate was tipsy and crusty, and the woman at the house flushed and peremptory, not allowing the inside to be seen, because the house was shut up."

When he passed over to the Continent (August 9–10th), he was met pretty much everywhere by soldiers and bayonets. The popular outbreaks of the year before, and Kossuth's war in Hungary, had set the governments on the alert. Paris was in what is called by a convenient fiction a state of siege; soldiers filled the streets; they were posted at every public square and every corner; were seen marching before the churches, the cornices of which bore the inscription of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, keeping their brethren quiet by the bayonet. As for the recently established republic, it was a republic only in name.

"There is very little public liberty in France," Mr. Bryant wrote, "except the liberty of suffrage. The police can seize the printed sheets of any journal containing expressions which the government happens to dislike, and prevent its circulation. The law punishes with severe penalties the vague offence of printing in public what is likely to bring hatred or contempt upon it; and, though a trial by jury is allowed in such cases, all the jury has to do is to say whether the offensive article was published or not, the judges, the creatures of the government, deciding whether the law is violated or not. There is no chance, therefore, of escape, when the government

has marked its victim. People are arrested and detained by it, and there is no process like our *habeas corpus* to deliver them if confined on a frivolous or insufficient pretext. There is no liberty of assembling to enforce public opinion on political questions. In short, there is a government, with popular forms, conducted in the worst spirit of oligarchy, and allowing ample scope for the exercise of the most capricious despotism."

Indeed, the Prince President, as he was called, was already plotting with his fellow-conspirators and bandits the overthrow of even the forms of liberty, which they had solemnly sworn to protect.

"We found the same swarms of soldiers everywhere. The cities along the Rhine were crowded with them; the sound of the drum was heard among the hills covered with vines; 'women were trundling loaded wheelbarrows and carrying panniers like asses to earn the taxes which are entailed to support the men who stalk about in uniform.' I entered Heidelberg," he adds, "with anticipations of pleasure: they were dashed in a moment. The town was occupied by Prussian troops which had been sent to take the part of the Grand Duke of Baden against the people. I could hardly believe this was the same peaceful and friendly city which I had known in better times. Every other man in the streets was a soldier; the beautiful walks about the old castle were full of them; in the evening they were reeling and howling through the streets."

It was no better in the lovely valleys of the Neckar—at Heilbrun, at Stuttgart, at Ulm—or at Munich, the elegant capital of Bavaria. He was rejoiced to be able to escape, so weary had he grown of the perpetual sight of military uniforms, into Switzerland, where, he says,

"I could almost have kneeled and kissed the shore of the hospitable republic; and really it was beautiful enough for such a demonstration of affection, for nothing could be lovelier than the declivities of that shore with its woods and orchards and grassy meadows, and green hollows running up to the mountain-tops, all fresh with a shower that has just passed, and now glittering in the sunshine, and interspersed with large Swiss houses, bearing quaintly carved galleries

and broad overhanging roofs, while to the east rose the glorious summits of the Alps, mingling with the clouds."

Annoyed by these military displays, he did not extend his journey beyond Switzerland, which he appears to have thoroughly ransacked for the sake of the scenery. But the dottings of his diary are confined mostly to the pictures he saw. In Paris he was introduced to Ary Scheffer, who was just then engaged on his "Christ the Rewarder," a companion-piece to the "Christ the Consoler," while his walls were still hung with the "Francesca di Rimini," "St. Augustine and Monica," and others of his finest works. At Munich, he visited, in addition to the new galleries of the Glyptotek and the Pinacotek, the studio of Kaulbach, who was at work on the "Destruction of Jerusalem," and of Schwanthaler, crowded with statues and models for the friezes for the Ruhmeshalle and the Walhalla. Professor Heinrich Meyer, on whom he called, was good enough to show him his Oriental drawings, made in a tour with Duke Maximilian in Egypt, Greece, Syria, and Palestine.

On getting home, in December, Mr. Dana suggested to him that he ought to collect his letters of travel into a volume; but he was averse to doing it, as he did not think compositions written in the hurry of movement from place to place of sufficient value to be put in a permanent form. His scruples, however, were overcome by the persuasions of Mr. G. P. Putnam, the publisher, at whose instance he gathered together a few that he had written, at various times, for his journal, from Illinois, Mackinaw, the South, Cuba, and Europe.* The book had very little unity of purpose in it, and no consecutiveness of narrative; and its success, as the author had expected, was only moderate with the general public. He was not a traveller, in the strict sense of the word, who visits different nations with a view to studying their peculiarities and institutions—only a

* "Letters of a Traveller." G. P. Putnam, New York, 1850.

tourist, who takes the accustomed routes and sees no more than his eyes see from the decks of steamers, or in rapid walks about places of note. Consequently, none of those adventures which give piquancy to travellers' tales ever befell him, and, as he was inveterately opposed to the detail of interviews with distinguished personages, his pages wanted a fertile source of interest. Yet there were those who took pleasure in his fine descriptions of nature and his simple and limpid style, and a certain demand for his sketches has continued to exist.

Mr. Bryant, on his return, was in fact so much absorbed in his farm and his friends that he found little time for literary cares.

"ROSLYN, MARCH 29, 1850:* Your letter was read by me to the Sketch Club, at Mr. William Kemble's, a fortnight ago last evening, and received with clapping of hands. All expressed their satisfaction at the invitation, and all are coming. How many will come you will probably know on the day appointed. The secretary made a note of it in due form. I offered to add something to the letter by way of commentary or explanation, but not a word was I allowed to say; the members were so well pleased with the letter they would suffer nothing to take the taste of it out of their mouths. With Mr. Durand I have specially conferred, and Mr. Durand has specially promised to be one of the party.

"Now, I really hope that you will see that the country is in its best trim on the occasion; that there be no late frosts to spoil the freshness of early summer, that just at the time the roads be in good order, the weather fair and not too hot or too cold, and the atmosphere reasonably clear. It will not be amiss if there should have been a pretty copious shower the night before, just to lay the dust. I mention these things because you who live in the country are very apt to fall into the habit of taking them as they come, and neglect them very much."

"ROSLYN, JULY 4, 1850:† I have been passing a few days at my place on Long Island, and to-morrow must go back to the town—the foul, hot, noisy town. How it will smell of the tons of gunpowder

* To Rev. Dr. Dewey, at Sheffield, Mass. † To R. H. Dana, Esq.

that have been burnt in it to-day! I hear the thunder of its guns even here, but it does not disturb the birds. The fire-bird and the song-sparrow have been singing all day among my locusts and horse-chestnuts, in spite of it. We have quite given the world the go-by to-day. We have been no farther than the garden, from the foot of which we saw in the morning a sloop go down the bay, with a fiddle on board, and a score of young women in sun-bonnets. Nobody has been to see us but a little boy of two years old, whom, at his particular desire, I took to the barn to see the pigs and chickens, and whom I was obliged to refresh with a liberal handful of cherries which I climbed the tree to gather. Between eleven and twelve o'clock I had rather a sweltering time in the garden gathering the first of the raspberries and the last of the strawberries. If we had a quiet friend or two, like yourself, the day, I know, would pass more agreeably; but we get a good deal of contentment from it as it is, and it is not wishing you any great ill-luck to wish you here, for the temperature all day has been delightful, and since two o'clock—it is now four—a fresh breeze has sprung up, full of spirit, which is now bringing in at the windows the scent of the flowers of early summer, and some faint odor of the hay-fields. If you care for sea-bathing, the tide is swelling up, and when it meets the grass, I think I shall take a plunge myself. A copy of my 'Letters of a Traveller' was sent to you some time since, from Putnam, who is my bookseller, and who seems to be a very well-behaved man in his vocation. I hope you got it. You are the instigator of its publication, and if it be a bad book you must bear your share of the blame. I know very well that it is light matter, and the world would be no wiser if it were to get it by heart, but I hope it will do no harm. It is a tolerably good book, in the bookseller's sense of the phrase, for it sells pretty well. The periodical press has been civil to it, and the 'Courier' had the magnanimity to set the example of commending the style. Does it not make one egotistical to write letters? I am sure you must suspect this to be the case when you read mine. It was well done of your son to give the world Mr. Allston's 'Lectures' and 'Poems.' We wanted another edition of his poems, which have been long out of print, and the lectures were needed by our artists and our judges of art, to teach them how to think on such subjects, how to look at nature, and how to compare nature with the representations of her on canvas."

"NEW YORK, OCTOBER 25, 1850:* We have passed rather a pleasant and healthy summer. Part of the time the weather was hot, but always showery, and the earth green, and the woods thick with foliage. We had frequent thunder-storms, and several violent gales of wind, one of which did considerable mischief to me by shaking off my apples, which are not very abundant on Long Island this year. We had large crops of hay, good crops of wheat and corn, and excellent potatoes, but little injured by the disease which in some parts on the main-land has done considerable damage. The cherries this year were particularly abundant, the strawberries very fine, and lasted long, the raspberries almost equally good, the summer pears abundant, the later pears good for nothing; the peaches on Long Island poor and ripening early, but in New Jersey and elsewhere plentiful to a degree I never knew before, though not of so good a flavor, I think, as usual. The autumn thus far has been uncommonly fine—a warm, sunshiny September, a still and sunny October, and great brilliancy of color in the woods, owing, I suppose, to the strong summer heats, which brought on the old age of the leaf before the frosts. In September, the latter part of the month, we made an excursion to the east end of the island, visiting Easthampton, a level country of fields of heavy loam in the midst of sandy woods, inhabited by a primitive race of people much like the New Englanders. From this place we went to Montauk Point, the extreme eastern end of the island, a hilly region of hard loam, with clefts of gravel forming its shores. There are scarcely any trees on the Point, which is nine or ten miles long, and is almost all pasturage, with eight or ten Indian houses on it, and three inhabited by white people, the keepers of the herds, besides the house of the keeper of the light-house. It is a great place for fishing."

"ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND, JUNE 16, 1851:† I wish you were here just now to enjoy our season of roses and strawberries; you might have your own afterward. I would ask your advice, who are a practical landscape gardener, as to some walks which I am laying out in my woods, and you should decide for me at which point we could have the finest peeps at the water. Our neighborhood is now very beautiful; the later summer heats parch and wither the verdure of an

* To John H. Bryant. † To Charles Sedgwick.

island. But now one might almost fancy that the clouds had dropped leaves with the rains, and buried us in a flood of foliage. We have nothing here, I acknowledge, like your mountains, with their infinite variety of aspects, the lakes they embosom, and their broad woods—a wood, to have its true majesty, must be seen on a mountain-side—nor have we your swift streams. But what we have you should be welcome to. Meantime I entertain myself with comparing the images of beauty presented by the two regions. I am indebted to you and your 'amiable family,' as the Spanish say, for some of the finest landscapes in the picture-gallery of my memory, collected during our late pleasant visit to Berkshire. Claude Lorraine's are a trifle *warmer* in the atmosphere, but in all other respects they leave him far behind. Ruskin, you know, says that Claude was a clumsy artist, so that this would be no compliment in his estimation to the pictures of which I speak."

At this time the great object of the politicians was to get the subject of slavery, in some way or other, out of sight. It had played such havoc with the party organizations, and produced such a state of sectional animosity, that the chief anxiety of the leaders was to hit upon some compromise of the various points involved in it which should satisfy all parts of the country. After a series of furious debates in Congress, Mr. Henry Clay introduced in a single bill a number of measures called Compromise Measures, which it was supposed, after they were carried, would accomplish the end. This bill provided, 1, for the organization of New Mexico and Utah into territories without reference to slavery; 2, for the admittance into the Union of California, where the recent discovery of gold deposits had suddenly concentrated a vast population, as a free State; 3, for the payment to Texas of $10,000,000 for her claims upon New Mexico; 4, for the abolition of the slave-trade—i. e., of auction blocks and chain gangs, not of slavery—in the District of Columbia; and 5, for the more assured and speedy return of fugitive slaves to their alleged masters.

As a whole, these "measures" indicated a considerable advance in public opinion; but, while they contained some con-

cessions to the antislavery sentiment, they were yet in many respects unsatisfactory. They did not determine the *status* of slaves in the territories, which was the most important point to be determined, and they made stipulations for the seizure and recovery of flying bondsmen, which were in the highest degree offensive to free men of the North, who would neither become slave-catchers themselves, nor allow their public judicial officers to be converted into slave-catchers. General Taylor, having died after a year's occupancy of the Presidential chair, was succeeded by Mr. Fillmore, of New York, the Vice-President; and he, after the manner of Vice-Presidents who get to be Presidents, endeavored to create a party of his own, which should help him to a second term. He supposed that it strengthened his cause to enforce, by all the means in his power, the law for the return of fugitives; but the effect of his zeal was rather to sever the Whig party, by which he had been elevated, than to further his own prospects. During this controversy Mr. Bryant was a strenuous opponent of the Fillmore policy. He felt that the question of slavery, in all its incidents, was to be settled by principles alone, and not by compromises; and the greater part of his writing at this time was directed to that end.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH.

THE HOME-LIFE AT ROSLYN.

A. D. 1851, 1852.

In a letter of this period, Mr. Bryant describes himself as "grinding wearisomely at the mill," and it must be confessed that he was working hard; but he found a great deal of relief and compensation at his home on the island. Several of his best friends had gathered about him there, or were near at hand. Dr. Henry Anderson, his old colleague, was a resident of the neighborhood; Mrs. Caroline M. Kirkland, author of "A New Home," and other lively sketches of western life, occupied one of his cottages; to his married daughter he had given a beautiful home near his own; and visitors of distinction, or of agreeable qualities, were seldom wanting. Among these may be recalled the famous Ida Pfeiffer—a lithe little lady with small, black, flashing eyes—with whose zeal for wandering over the face of the earth he could sympathize, and whose stories of

> "the cannibals that each other eat,
> The anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders,"

were full of an exciting and romantic charm; Halleck, the poet, always radiant with cheerfulness, and ever charged with humorous conceits; Mrs. Robinson, wife of Dr. Robinson, the orientalist, more variously informed even than her husband, especially in the dialects and traditions of Servia; Miss Sedg-

wick, and her brother Charles, beams of sunshine both; Dr. Dickson, ever ready to pour out the exuberant stream of rarest knowledge; sometimes the actors Forrest and Hackett, and more frequently the artists Durand, H. K. Brown, Huntington, Hicks, Hall, and others. Mr. Bryant's hospitality, never ostentatious or profuse, was always genial and hearty. It gave him pleasure to entertain his friends, whether they came as the Sketch Club, to wander through his fields, or as the children of the public school, once a year, to eat his pears; but he seldom allowed his company to interfere with his labors of direction on the farm, or with his literary engagements. He made them feel at home, and then allowed them to select their pastimes for themselves. Yet it was to be observed that, with a multiplicity of things to do, he never seemed to be busy, and at any hour of the day it needed but a word of invitation to entice him to a stroll, which, before it was ended, put his companion's legs to a serious trial.

Of his home and his habits at this time, Mrs. Kirkland wrote a description for a book called "The Homes of American Authors" (1852), which those who have not seen it will, doubtless, be pleased to read.

"The house," she said, "stands at the foot of a woody hill, which shelters it on the east, facing Hempstead harbor, to which the flood tide gives the appearance of a lake, bordered to its very edge with trees, through which, at intervals, are seen farm-houses and cottages, and all that brings to mind that beautiful image, 'a smiling land.' The position is well chosen, and it is enhanced in beauty by a small artificial pond, collected from the springs with which the hill abounds, and lying between the house and the edge of the harbor, from which it is divided by an irregular embankment, affording room for a plantation of shade-trees and fine shrubbery. . . . The library occupies the northwest corner—that which in our artist's sketch appears at the left—and we need hardly say that of all the house this is the most attractive spot, not only because, besides ample store of books, it is supplied with all that can minister to quiet and refined pleasure, but because it is, *par excellence*, the haunt of the poet and his friends.

Here, by the great table covered with periodicals and literary novelties, with the soft, ceaseless music of rustling leaves, and the singing of birds, making the silence sweeter, the summer visitor may fancy himself in the very woods, only with a deeper and more grateful shade; and 'when wintry blasts are piping loud,' and the whispering leaves have changed to whirling ones, a bright wood-fire lights the home-scene, enhanced in comfort by the inhospitable sky without; and the domestic lamp calls about it a smiling or musing circle, for whose conversation or silence the shelves around afford excellent material. The collection of books is not large, but widely various, Mr. Bryant's tastes and pursuits leading him through the entire range of literature, from the Fathers to Shelley, and from Courier to Jean Paul. In German, French, and Spanish he is a proficient, and Italian he reads with ease; so all these languages are well represented in the library. He turns naturally from the driest treatise on politics or political economy to the wildest romance or the most tender poem—happy in a power of enjoying all that genius has created or industry achieved in literature.

"The library has not, however, power to keep Mr. Bryant from the fields, in which he seeks health and pleasure a large part of every day that his editorial duties allow him to pass at home. To explore his farm, entering into the minutest details of its cultivation; to thread the beautiful woodland hill back of the house, making winding paths and shady seats to overlook the water or command the distant prospect; to labor in the garden with the perseverance of an enthusiast—these ought, perhaps, to be called his favorite occupations; for, as literature has been the business of his life, these out-door pleasures have all the charm of contrast, together with that of relaxation. It is under the open sky, and engaged in rural matters, that Mr. Bryant is seen to advantage—that is, in his true character. It is here that the amenity and natural sweetness of disposition, sometimes clouded by the cares of life and the untoward circumstances of business intercourse, shine gently forth under the influences of nature, so dear to the heart and tranquillizing to the spirits of her child. Here the eye puts on its deeper and soft lustre, and the voice modulates itself to the tone of affection, sympathy, enjoyment. Little children cluster about the grave man's steps, or climb his shoulders in triumph, and 'serenest eyes' meet his in fullest confidence, finding there none of

the sternness of which casual observers sometimes complain. It seems almost a pity that other walks should ever draw him hence; but perhaps the contrast between garden walks and city pavements is required for the perfection and durability of rural pleasures.

"There can hardly be found a man who has tried active life for fifty years, yet preserved so entire and resolute a simplicity of character and habits as Mr. Bryant. No one can be less a man of the world—so far as that term expresses a worldly man—in spite of a large share of foreign travel, and extensive intercourse with society. A disposition somewhat exclusive, and a power of living self-enclosed at will, may account in part for the total failure of politics, society, or ambition, to introduce anything artificial upon a character enabled by natural courage to face opposition, and, by inherent self-respect, to adhere to individual tastes, in spite of fashion or convention. And the simplicity which is the result of high cultivation is so much more potent than that which arises only from ignorance that it may be doubted whether, if Mr. Bryant had never left his native village of Cummington, in the heart of Massachusetts, he would have been as free from all sophistication of taste and manners as at present. It is with no sentimental aim that we call him the child of nature, but because he is one of the few who, by their docility and devotion, show that they are not ashamed of the great mother, or desirous to exchange her rule for something more fashionable or popular. . . .

"Mr. Bryant's habits of life have a smack of asceticism, although he is the disciple of none of the popular schools which, under various forms, claim to rule the present world in that direction. Milk is more familiar to his lips than wine, yet he does not disdain the 'cheerful hour' over which moderation presides. He eats sparingly of animal food, but he is by no means afraid to enjoy roast goose lest he should outrage the manes of his ancestors, like some modern enthusiasts. He 'hears no music' if it be fantastical, yet his ear is finely attuned to the varied harmonies of wood and wave. His health is delicate, yet he is almost never ill; his life laborious, yet carefully guarded against excessive and exhausting fatigue. He is a man of rule, but none the less tolerant of want of method in others; strictly self-governed, but not prone to censure the unwary or the weak-willed. In religion he is at once catholic and devout, and to moral excellence no soul bows lower. Placable we can perhaps hardly call him, for impressions on

his mind are almost indelible; but it may, with the strictest truth, be said that it requires a great offence, or a great unworthiness, to make an enemy of him, so strong is his sense of justice. Not amid the bustle and dust of the political arena, cased in armor offensive and defensive, is a champion's more intimate self to be estimated; but in the pavilion or the bower, where, in robes of ease, and with all professional ferocity laid aside, we see his natural form and complexion, and hear, in placid, domestic tones, the voice so lately thundering above the fight. So we willingly follow Mr. Bryant to Roslyn; see him musing on the pretty rural bridge that spans the fish-pond; or taking the oar in his daughter's fairy boat; or pruning his trees; or talking over farming matters with his neighbors; or—to return to the spot whence we set out some time ago—sitting calm and happy in that pleasant library, surrounded by the friends he loves to draw about him; or listening to the prattle of infant voices, quite as much at home there as under their own more especial roof—his daughter's, within the same enclosure."

Writing to Mr. Dana, April 8, 1851, Mr. Bryant said:

"Cooper is in town in ill-health. When I saw him last he was in high health and excellent spirits. He has grown thin, and has an ashy instead of a florid complexion."

He had come to the city, indeed, for medical aid, and only returned to his home on Lake Otsego to die. Of course, the passing away of a man who had filled so large a space in the public mind could not fail to call forth some public recognition of his life and services; and everybody instinctively designated Mr. Bryant, his old companion and friend, as the proper person to give expression to the general feeling. At the request of the New York Historical Society, he delivered an address upon the character of Cooper before a large assembly, of which Daniel Webster acted as Chairman, and Washington Irving was one of the guests (February 25, 1852). Mr. Bryant spoke with less power than when he delivered his funeral oration on Cole, for he was personally less attached to Cooper than to Cole, and his audience was not so sympathetic—but

he was still warm, earnest, and eloquent. Cooper's books were more to him than they can be to their present readers. They burst upon the world when Mr. Bryant himself had just published his first book, and his heart was full of the hope inspired by the dawn of what promised to be a brighter day for our literature. A certain patriotic glow tinged his estimate of the genius of the man who, with Irving, had given that literature to the knowledge of mankind. But he was not carried away by his personal likes; and, while he yielded Cooper the fullest measure of admiration, he was not insensible to his faults. Of his personal character he was prompt to speak, and, although a large part of the public were still embittered by prejudices excited by his many controversies with the press, Mr. Bryant nobly vindicated his motives, his probity, his courage, and his independence.*

During the summer of 1852 Mr. Bryant seems to have become dissatisfied with the new Free-Soil Party, which he had helped to form. He had expected that it would make itself the party of Freedom in every sense of the word—not merely of freedom for the black man, important as it was, but of freedom for the white man, who was still swaddled and oppressed by the most pernicious forms of restrictive legislation. But he found its principal members scarcely more enlightened on economic subjects than those of the older parties; the greater number of them, in fact, having been trained among the Whigs, were obstinate sticklers for protection in one or the other of its shapes. While inscribing upon its banners the broad device of "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Men," it was obviously indifferent to

* It was one object of this address to raise the funds for a monument to Cooper. Some money was subscribed, and Horatio Greenough, the sculptor, interested himself in preparing the designs for it; but still, thirty years after the novelist's death, the purpose remains unaccomplished. Our beautiful Central Park is ornamented by the forms of Shakespeare, Scott, Burns, and Humboldt—who represent the genius of other nations—but the images of our great native authors, Irving and Cooper, are yet to be placed by the side of those of Halleck and Morse.

the real emancipation of labor, which can come only from a removal of the fetters that bind the commercial intercourse of nations. He thought the party, in fact, degenerating into a mere faction of one idea, and, therefore, likely to prove inefficient, if not wholly useless; and he concurred with his associates, on the nomination of Franklin Pierce for the Presidency by the Democrats, in giving him the support of the journal. Writing to his brother in Illinois, he said:

"The Free-Soil Party is now doing nothing. Its representatives in Congress have wasted their time till all chance of repealing or modifying the fugitive slave law is gone by, if there ever was any. They have left everything to be done by the journals. Now, at the end of the session, when it is too late for serious debate, Sumner gets up and wants to make a speech. They refuse to consider his resolution, as might have been expected. He might have stated the subject a score of times in the early part of the session. The whole conduct of the public men of the party has been much of a piece with this. What is the use of preserving a separate organization if such be its fruits? But, as I intimated, I see not the least chance of a repeal or change of the fugitive slave law. Its fate is to fall into disuse. All political organizations to procure its repeal are attempts at an impracticability. We must make it odious, and prevent it from being enforced. That the 'Evening Post' can do, in a certain measure, just as effectively by supporting Pierce as Hale.* Nay, it can do it far more effectually. A journal belonging to a large party has infinitely more influence than when it is the organ of a small conclave. In speaking against slavery, the 'Evening Post' expresses the opinions of a large number of people; in exhorting them to vote for Mr. Hale it expresses the opinions of few. The Free-Soil members of Congress—Hale and Sumner, and many others—are not more than half right on various important questions. Freedom of trade is not by any means a firmly established policy in this country. I do not know where these men are on that question. They vote away the public money into the pockets of the Hunkers—Collins, for example. The only certainty we have of safety in regard to these matters is in a Democratic administration.

* The presidential candidate of the Liberty Party.

"These are some of my reasons for supporting Pierce. I think the slavery question an important one, but I do not see what is to be done for the cause of freedom by declining to vote for the Democratic candidate."

In coming to this conclusion, Mr. Bryant was no doubt influenced by the Free-Soilers of New York, with whom he agreed more entirely than with any other political body. Hoping to infuse a little of their own leaven into the lump from which they had separated, they rejoined the Democrats, who supported Pierce. But they soon saw their mistake. The Democrats were no more favorable to truly liberal principles than the Free-Soilers were; and when the civil war arose in Kansas, between the "Border Ruffians," the agents of slavery, and the Free Settlers, with old John Brown, of Ossawattomie, among them, the administration at Washington did what it could to further the designs of the slavists. In a little while the "Evening Post" was as denunciatory of Pierce as it had been of Fillmore—and for pretty much the same reasons. Mr. Bryant took an active part in forwarding freemen to the scene of conflict by means of the colonization companies that were formed, and he was not averse even to the employment of money in the purchase of those "Sharpe's Rifles" which became final and effective arbiters.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH.

A JOURNEY TO THE EAST.

A. D. 1853, 1854.

On the 13th of November, 1852, Mr. Bryant set sail, in company with Mr. Leupp, on a long-projected journey to the Orient. He was fortunate, on the voyage out, in meeting several agreeable fellow-passengers, among them Captain Lynch, of the United States navy, who had just completed an exploration of the Dead Sea, and was able to give him a great deal of useful information as to the countries to which he was going; and Horace Binney Wallace, of Philadelphia, a young lawyer and writer of extraordinary talent and culture, whose sudden death, a few weeks later, at Paris, deprived our literature of a brilliant ornament.*

Arriving in Liverpool, the authors among them were surprised to be compelled to surrender the American books, taken with them to beguile the dulness of the passage, to the Custom-House officers. As the works so sequestered had been republished in England, they could not be introduced there from abroad. Captain Lynch lost in this way his own report of his doings in Palestine, and Mr. Bryant a volume of his poems that he was about to present to a friend. I am not

* Mr. Wallace was the author of several law-books, two or three novels, and of a volume of essays. After his death, his friends put forth, under the title of "Art, Scenery, and Philosophy in Europe" (Phil., H. Hooker, 1855), a collection of his writings remarkable for critical penetration and eloquence. Mr. Wallace was selected by Auguste Comte as his representative and chief pupil in the United States.

aware that the copyright laws under which these foolish wrongs were perpetrated have since been modified, but the practice to which our travellers fell victims has ceased.

England was then suffering under an almost unprecedented deluge of rain, and no excursions into the rural parts were to be thought of. "I never saw so wet a country," Mr. Bryant wrote to his wife; "the fields are soaked, the ways full of mud, the low grounds under water, the ditches turned to streams, the mills standing still in the flood, the sheep scarcely able to walk with their drenched fleeces, men and women dripping with water digging turnips out of the slush, and beggars in the towns even wringing the water out of their poor rags. Not since 1795 has there been so much rain. The wheat is not sown, and the earth is too much drenched to be plowed." He hurried, consequently, to London, but did not tarry there, as it was late in the autumn, and most of his acquaintances were out of town. One entry, however, in his diary is worthy of note. He passed an evening at the house of Mr. John Chapman, a publisher of the Strand, "where I met," he remarks, "the Rev. Thomas J. Upham, an old poetic correspondent of mine; a blue-stocking lady, who writes for the 'Westminster Review,' named Ellans; and a Mr. Spencer, a bookseller." The "blue-stocking lady," as this biographer discovered a few days later, was Miss Marian Evans, since celebrated as George Eliot, and the "Mr. Spencer, a bookseller," was probably Herbert Spencer, who is a bookseller only in so far as he has been a book-maker. Mr. Bryant's attention was most likely diverted from them by other persons who were in the habit of frequenting the parlors of Mr. Chapman, such as Crabbe Robinson—the friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth—and Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux, fugitives from the imperial despotism but lately established in France. His interest in the political condition of the continent was absorbing, and he was doubtless glad to encounter men who had been such prominent actors in the late revolutionary movements.

Paris, when he reached it (December 1st), exhibited very little evidence of the tumultuous scenes of just a year ago. Not only were the people quiet, but they seemingly acquiesced, without protest, in the criminal proceedings by which the supreme power had been usurped, and the splendid spoils of victory distributed among the conspirators. Those immense and magnificent projects for rebuilding the metropolis, designed to dazzle the public mind into a momentary forgetfulness of the perjuries and murders by which power had been reached, were already begun, and had had their effect.

"It was the evening before the proclamation of the Empire," Mr. Bryant writes, "that I arrived in Paris. The next morning the town was waked by the firing of cannon, and, as the day wore on, the shops were shut, and, notwithstanding the rain, for it was one of the gloomiest and saddest days of a Parisian winter, the population flocked to the Boulevards and the broader streets, where detachments of the army and of the national guard were marching to the sound of music. I was present as the newly proclaimed Emperor was conducted to the palace of the Tuileries by a military escort. The ceremony was rather imposing. A body of cavalry, in plumed and glittering casques, first dashed briskly forward, through the space opened for them in the immense multitude which thronged the Champs Elysées and the garden of the Tuileries, like the gusts which sweep the streets before a tempest. Then came the Emperor on horseback amid his generals and marshals. A few cries of *Vive l'Empereur* arose, which he answered by taking off his hat and bowing to the people. He appeared of shorter stature than most of the officers of his suite, but he sat his horse well, a spirited creature, which pranced and curvetted, and seemed proud of bearing the sovereign of the French Empire. The party entered the palace-gates, and not long afterward the Emperor showed himself at the balcony. The troops in front of the palace greeted his appearance with acclamations, but from the crowd which stood around me not a single cry was heard. They were persons of all conditions and ages; well-dressed men and ladies, men in blouses and women in caps, all looking on in silence as on a spectacle in which they had no part. There was an utter absence not only of enthusiasm, but even of the least affectation of enthusiasm.

"The city was illuminated in the evening—meagrely illuminated, except in a few instances. The illumination was a part of the prescribed ceremonies of the occasion, and was commanded by the government. Twice in the course of the day a message from the police was brought to the hotel where I lodge, intimating that it was expected that the house would be illuminated; and the order was obeyed, of course."

Despite the want of enthusiasm for the new dynasty, the people seemed to prefer the quiet of arbitrary rule to the agitations of revolutionary violence.

At Paris our travellers were joined by Mr. John Durand, son of the artist, who has since made a name for himself as the chosen translator of Mr. H. Taine's books, and whose assistance was particularly effective in various ways. Mr. Bryant's own plan had been to go southward through Spain, a country with which his imagination had been fired by his earlier studies, but he was diverted by reports that it was not yet altogether safe from robbers. Accordingly, the party took its leisurely way by Lyons, Marseilles, and Nismes, to Genoa, whence it sailed to Naples, stopping at Leghorn and Pisa to revive old memories, and from Naples, after a visit to Pompeii, Amalfi, Pæstum, and Nocera, to the island of Malta, where it passed some days, and then embarked on the English steamer for Alexandria. On this steamer Mr. Bryant met with Mr. Fortune, the English traveller and botanist, from whose conversation he derived much knowledge in one of his favorite pursuits. Mr. Fortune, who had made two visits to China, to inquire into its vegetable productions, was decidedly of the opinion that tea could not be grown in the United States, because of the dearness of labor; but he suggested other products which might easily be transplanted. "There is one kind of fruit," he remarked, "which I am introducing into Northern India, and which, I am sure, would succeed in some parts of your country. It is called in China the *yang-mae*—a fruit of the size of a plum, resembling that of the arbutus, but larger—a crimson berry, covered all over with small projecting points, very

agreeable to the palate, and with just acidity enough in its flavor to make it refreshing. You have in America some plants of the genus to which it belongs, the *myrica*." I instanced the *myrica cerifera*, or candleberry myrtle, bearing large quantities of berries. "The *yang-mae* also," proceeded Mr. Fortune, "is an abundant bearer. It will not answer for England, as our summers are not warm enough, but in those parts of the United States where the mercury in Fahrenheit's thermometer does not fall in winter below twenty, or, at the utmost, twelve degrees, and where you have a nice warm summer"—such was his phrase—"to ripen it, the fruit would be produced in perfection. It would be well worth the while of some of your horticulturists to take measures for introducing it from the northern parts of China."

In a subsequent conversation, Mr. Fortune mentioned a hardy kind of palm, the only one which will grow in cold climates, and very common in some parts of China. "It requires," he observed, "a warm summer, and will bear a severe winter, and is the very tree for the United States. It is a *chamærops*, a genus of the palm family, of which there are several species, all of them tropical plants but this. It looks strange, in the depth of winter, to see this tree, apparently a production of the tropics, with its large evergreen leaves loaded with snow. The Chinese obtain from the upper part of it a kind of net-work, the sheathing of the young leaves, knotted with the most perfect regularity, which they apply to many useful purposes."

At Cairo the travellers remained a week, exploring the Pyramids, and making arrangements for their journey across the desert, but, in the interval, they were easily enticed to consent to a tour up the Nile with a party that had chartered a steamboat for the purpose. This tour extended only a little beyond the first cataract, and is thus briefly described in a letter to Mrs. Bryant:

"CAIRO, EGYPT, JANUARY 29, 1853: I have just returned from a voyage on the Nile to Upper Egypt, about seven hundred miles, if we

include the windings of the river, and somewhat over four hundred in a direct line. We stopped at the most interesting places long enough to see them as thoroughly as we wished, besides making short stoppages at several towns to take in coal. The steamer in which we went was Number 14 of those belonging to Abbas Pacha, the sovereign of the country, or, as he is called, the Viceroy. Parties of twelve or more are made up from time to time for visiting Upper Egypt on these steamers, and they pay the government twenty-eight pounds sterling each, which includes the expense of the table. Several Americans were waiting at Cairo for the arrival of travellers to make up the requisite number, when they heard of us and immediately came to propose the voyage to us.

"Our party consisted of fifteen — nine Americans, namely, Mr. Balch, a Universalist minister, with three young men under his care, one of whom was a son of Mr. Havemeyer, another a son of Moses Taylor,* and the third a Mr. Barley, of Philadelphia; the other Americans were Mr. Keith, of New Orleans, a Mr. Reding, of California, and ourselves. We had, besides, Dr. Barclay, a Scotch clergyman, a very well-informed man; Mr. Neel, a Methodist teacher of an academy in the island of Jersey; Mr. Budget, a young English Methodist; Mr. Skirving, a Scotch writer for the press; Mr. Clements, an Oxford student, and M. Guillaume, a Frenchman. Our captain was a Turk, the purser was an Englishman, the crew Egyptians, and the waiters Smyrniotes and Greeks. Mr. Skirving was on a bridal tour with his wife, and had just come from Palestine. It was his intention to take her up the Nile, but she was indisposed; so we had no ladies on board.

"Nevertheless, we had a pleasant time of it, although I was glad when we got back to Cairo again, after an absence of sixteen days. The weather was monotonously fine, and I believe we had all seen old temples and tombs to our hearts' content. We were very well pleased with one another, and agreed perfectly in regard to all the arrangements of the voyage, except on the point of being out of bed in the morning, some of us being remarkably early, and others very late, risers. It is not often that a company of passengers in any vessel, so casually thrown together as we were, contains so many intelligent, rational, and amiable persons.

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* Acquaintances of New York.

"Besides the ruins and tombs of Thebes, the first of which are very grand, and the others the most striking of their kind, we saw the ruins of Philæ above the first cataract, the ruins of Denderah, of Edfoo, of Esné, and Kom Ombo, the grottos of Tel el Amarna and Beni Hassan, and one or two places less interesting. We paid a visit to the Coptic priests at Negadeh, who seemed well pleased with the compliment, and brought down almost the entire population of the town, except the women, to see us depart. It is remarkable that the reserve and exclusion of the women should be as strict among the Copts of this country, although Christians, as among the Mussulmans. Our journey took us almost to the twenty-fourth degree of north latitude, and we have come back considerably browner for the constant and strong sunshine to which we have been exposed. The nights have been very cold, almost frosty, and the days warm, once or twice hot. The country through which we passed south of Cairo has a very uniform aspect—palm-trees, mud towns, a strip of green level land on the shore of the river, and always of the same height—four or five hundred feet—forming the background on either side. From these cliffs the desert stretches away to a vast extent; the valley of the Nile is a green stripe dividing the wilderness of rock and sand.

"The people seem to be a good-natured race, easily amused, with wants which are easily satisfied. They are lively, noisy, ignorant, abject, but are capable of regular industry when tolerably well paid, at least so I am told by foreign residents in the country. Their habits seem to me dirty, though Lane in his book on Egypt calls them cleanly; a people who never wash their clothing, and whom you see at every turn picking the lice from their garments, cannot deserve the epithet cleanly. They squat in the dust and sand whenever they are not standing at their work, and, with their mud-floors and mud-walls, they are, of course, begrimed more or less with the dry mould with which they are almost always in contact.

"I should have mentioned that just above Assouan, or Essouan, where our steamer stopped, there is a region where the face of the country is quite picturesque. Here the Nile breaks its way through rocks, forming rocky islands, of which Philæ, the sacred island of the Egyptians, is one. The granite cliffs are piled upon each other in pinnacles, and the river rushes rapidly between them. Here is the frontier of Egypt proper, and farther south lies Nubia, the inhabi-

tants of which are negroes. Elephantiné, the most southern of these islands, has a negro settlement; and at Essouan we saw forty or fifty half-naked black men and women, brought from the interior—mostly women—to be sold as slaves to the Egyptians.

"Yesterday our steamer landed us near Cairo, and we are now just ready for beginning our journey on camels from this place to Gaza, whence we shall proceed on horses to Jerusalem. The journey to Gaza is principally across a desert—the Little Desert it is called. We travel with tents and beds, and a stock of provisions, furnished by a dragoman, who is paid twenty francs a day by each of the party. At Gaza we submit to a quarantine of three days, and then enter the territory of Syria.

"I expect to hear from you at Smyrna, to which place we have ordered our letters to be sent from Malta. It is doubtful whether we shall go back by way of Malta, as we first thought of doing. I pine to hear from home—from you and my dear friends around you—and am sometimes almost tempted to end my journeyings in this region and go to some country where I can, at least, have news from you. Here all journeys are slow and subject to a thousand impediments, and the mails are brought at intervals of a fortnight or more. My health is good, and no fatigue that I meet with affects me; indeed, I have met with nothing which I can call fatigue, except when I write letters for the 'Evening Post.' Love to all."

Mr. Bryant mentions in one of his letters that, while at Thebes meditating upon the stupendous ruins of the eastern civilizations, a small note was put in his hand, asking him to call upon an Episcopal clergyman near by, whom he found in the last stages of consumption, unable and forbidden to articulate, but who wrote on a bit of paper his ardent thanks "to the author of 'Thanatopsis' for the great consolations that he, the writer, had derived from his poetry, through long years of illness and suffering." Mr. Bryant did what he could, of course, to relieve and comfort the patient; met him afterward at Cairo, but there is no note as to the issue of the case.

After their return, some fifteen days were occupied in the

journey across the Little Desert, accompanied by the ordinary haps of such travel—camel-riding, tent-pitching, visits from predatory Bedouins, crying jackals, dirty dervishes, beggars, fleas, and mosquitoes—when they reached Jerusalem, on the 13th of February. Descriptions of this trip are contained in "Letters from the East," which Mr. Bryant wrote for his journal and afterward put in a volume, so that the biographer has no occasion for dwelling upon the details.* A letter to Mr. Dana, written after his return home (in June, 1853), gives a rapid outline of his movements:

"In Syria (he said) I saw almost everything which travellers visit except the ancient town of Hebron. I bathed in the Jordan and in the Dead Sea; passed several days at Jerusalem, visited Nazareth, the Lake of Tiberias, Mount Carmel, Acre, Tyre, Sidon, and Beyrout. From Beyrout I crossed Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon to Damascus, returning by way of Baalbec. From Beyrout a steamer conveyed me to Constantinople; I returned to Smyrna, and went in a steamer to Athens;† crossed the Isthmus of Corinth to the Gulf of Lepanto, and took a steamer for the island of Corfu, a beautiful spot, where I passed two or three days. From Corfu I went directly by steamer to Trieste, and from Trieste to Venice. Then, after a little stay, to look at the pictures and architecture of the Venetian artists, I went by land to Florence and Rome, and from Rome‡ I came to Marseilles by way of Civita Vecchia and the Mediterranean. I had ten or twelve days

* "Letters from the East." G. P. Putnam & Sons, New York, 1869.

† At Syra, while the vessel was at anchor, a boat was moored alongside, having on board Mr. Evangelides, the American Consul at that place, whom thirty years before Mr. Bryant had celebrated in one of his poems as "The Greek Boy." Mr. Evangelides was brought by an American captain from Greece, during her troubles, to the United States, where he was educated, and then sent back as a missionary and teacher. He established schools in his native country, and was otherwise useful. His death took place in 1880, I think. See Poems, vol. i, notes.

‡ In Rome he met a great many acquaintances, old and new, who took delight in showing him the wonders of the imperial city. Among these, his note-books mention Margaret Fuller, the Rev. James Freeman Clarke, and the artists Crawford, Story, Page, Bartholomew, Chapman, Terry, Mozier, Rogers, R. S. Greenough, Ives, Freeman, the English sculptor Gibson, and others.

in Paris, and a day or two in London, from which I ran down to the Isle of Wight, and then embarked on the steamer Humboldt for New York. I had a chilly passage of thirteen days, and, when I got to New York, I seemed to find myself in a hot vapor bath. In my journey across the desert I let my beard grow, and found it so convenient to dispense with the trouble of shaving that I allowed no razor to pass over my face till I got to New York. One of the clerks of our office was sent down to the steamer to look for me, and did not know me when he had found me. I went down to my place on Long Island, put on a Turkish turban and gown, and had a long conversation in broken English with a young lady, our next-door neighbor, who really thought that I was an Oriental.*

"I am afraid, however, that I have come back no younger than I went. I am grinding at the mill again, and find it the same dull work as ever. Was it not singular that, the same moment that I got your letter, another was put in my hands enclosing an article about the New York journalists from a Leipsic paper, in which I was described 'as a little, dry, lean old man'? The pill was sweetened by several compliments, but it had a bitter flavor, after all."

Mr. Durand, in a letter upon the subject, describes Mr. Bryant as an excellent traveller and a most agreeable companion; always in elastic spirits, always cheerful and chatty, always keenly alive to the peculiar beauties of the scene, or to the naive, unaccustomed, and striking in character. Though profoundly interested in the associations that cluster about the localities of sacred history, and particularly in those in which the manhood and public life of Christ were passed, he was never apt to dilate with sentiment. He looked what he felt, but seldom uttered his emotions. Recalling his memories, Mr. Durand said: "The description of the desert in Mr. Bryant's book reminds me of the great value to our party of his botanical knowledge. I have applied the term dreary to the desert—and so it is relatively to more favored regions, but especially

* This costume Mr. Bryant often donned for the amusement of his grandchildren and his intimates, and, with his long white beard, he played the Arab sheik to perfection.

so to one who is not qualified to find 'good in everything.' To me it was made, if not a 'joy forever,' at least a tolerable place by the botanical attainments of our travelling companion. As we wearily strode along over the sand, bobbing backward and forward in measured stroke with the lunging pace of the camel, the tediousness was greatly relieved by Mr. Bryant's comments on the vegetation at our feet, consisting of various low shrubs and bushes, scattered here and there on the sparkling sand. Sometimes we would glide down from our elevated positions for a walk, and then give them closer study. Had it not been for his knowledge, our only impression of this really teeming soil would have been one of absolute sterility. His memory was wonderful. A tree, shrub, and flower assumed a new aspect through his familiarity with its life and habits. Many a time the poetic associations they awakened in his mind gave fresh interest to the soil they grew on. On ascending Mount Carmel, for instance, he pointed to the honeysuckle and the blooming cyclamen which grew profusely by the road-side, repeating, as he did so, 'On Carmel's flowery heights,' by Watts. At Pæstum he directed our attention to a cluster of the acanthus-leaves nestling in a cranny at the base of one of the columns of the ruined temple of Ceres, and his remarks were of special interest to me in connection with the fabled origin of the Corinthian capital. On the rocks of Malta he plucked a daisy, and, noting its botanical details one by one, recited the poem on that flower by Good (author of the 'Book of Nature'), in which they are all particularized. No matter where we might be, whether wandering through the beautiful gardens of Egypt, crossing the wide plain of Esdraelon sprinkled with anemones, watching the 'wild gazelle' on approaching 'Judah's hills,' amid the willows on the banks of the rapid Jordan, or sitting by the fountain which gives such life and beauty to Damascus—always some shrub, tree, or flower, elicited a fact or a poem to augment the interest of the various objects and landscapes."

It was characteristic of Mr. Bryant's promptness and

energy that, after returning from one of these journeys, he would, on the very day of his arrival, make his appearance at the office, take up his pen, and dash away at some topic of the hour. He did so after this visit to the East, and he adhered so closely to his work that his life furnishes scarcely an incident for the biographer, while his domestic correspondence became unusually barren. An extract or two is all that is to be gleaned from it:

"NEW YORK, JULY 19, 1853:* We have had a great time with the opening of the Crystal Palace here, and the banquet the next day; they used to call such things dinners. I went to neither of them. I like more space than you get at such places. I like air and elbow-room, as you find them about the Pyramids, as at Thebes and Baalbec. Do you know they are going to rail in the ruins of Thebes and Denderah and Edfou, and the other old remains in Egypt, and appoint guardians to take care of them? This will take off something from the effect of the ruins, but it will prevent them from being mutilated and disfigured. I meant to have astonished you with a long white beard—the growth of my chin while wandering in the East—and I sometimes asked myself the question whether Miss Robbins would know my face in such a costume. The day I went to Roslyn I put on a turban, a Turkish silk skirt and striped silk gown, which I got at Damascus, and a pair of yellow slippers, and held a fifteen minutes' conversation in broken English with Miss Hopkins, our next-door neighbor, she thinking all the time that I was a Turk. This is egotism, but I think you would have been interested in the people of the East if you had seen what I did. I do not believe in the theory that there is no chance of recovery for nations that have once degenerated. A great change is going on in the East; religious bigotry is wearing out, and by and by religious freedom will be enjoyed in the Turkish dominions to a greater extent than in any other country except the United States. The missionaries have already successfully introduced girls' schools in the north of Syria. Let the example be followed in other parts of the East, and the reign of barbarism will be over."

* To Miss Eliza Robbins.

"NEW YORK, MAY 26, 1854: * I am just now going into the country to remain till Monday, when I set out on a journey to Illinois with my wife. It will not be easy for me to do what you ask in regard to procuring a portrait of Coleridge, but I have put the thing into the hands of an intelligent young man in our office, who has promised that he will attend to it. I have not read the life of Hartley Coleridge, of which you speak, but your recommendation makes me resolve to do so. As to my poems with illustrations, that is an idea of my bookseller. There is, I suppose, a class of readers, at least of book-buyers, who like things of that kind; but the first thing which my bookseller —it is Appleton—has promised to do, is to get out a neat edition in two volumes, *without* illustrations. The illustrated edition is a subsequent affair, and, though I have as great a horror of illustrations as you have, they will, I hope, hurt nobody. I am not even sure that I will look at them myself. What you say of the doings of our Government I am sorry not to be able to disagree with. It seems to me that never was public wickedness so high-handed in our country as now."

"NEW YORK, AUGUST 15, 1854: † I sometimes almost wish my place was sold, more on my wife's account than any other; but I am not sure that she would get well any faster anywhere else than there, where we have a pretty genial climate, and sea-bathing, which I think does her a great deal of good. The twelve hours' railway travel (to Sheffield) of which you speak affrights me; and then your spring is so long in coming, and your winter pounces upon the fields and woods in such a hurry. I think we must stay in these latitudes, though the bribe you offer us to go north is very tempting. Why cannot that series of papers which is to make the world stare be written without my coming to Sheffield? Try number one, and enjoy their astonishment from your lurking-place. . . . My brother John is here, and I, the printer, am putting in type for him a little volume of his poems. I hope there is nothing vulgar or mechanical in being a printer. Horace Walpole, you know, the most fastidious of men, had a press at Strawberry Hill, and printed there the Odes of Gray. . . .

"The world within ten or twenty years past has not been growing any better that I can see, although my excellent neighbor, Joseph Cur-

* To R. H. Dana.

† To Dr. Dewey, at Sheffield.

tis, whose cheerful views of things are a great support to me, sees differently. One reason why the world makes no more progress in goodness is that we all begin life at the same point; we all set out from the pure natural man at our birth. People overlook that fact, it seems to me, when they talk of the progress of the age, and imagine that the son of a good wise man is, as soon as he is born, as virtuous and enlightened as his father."

The editions of the Poems referred to above were issued by Appleton & Co.—who became thenceforth his publishers for the rest of his life—one, without illustrations, containing all the pieces that had before appeared in different volumes, and another, comprising the same matter, with illustrations and a portrait. The illustrations were mainly by English sketchers—Birket Foster, Dalziel, Pickersgill, and others—who did not always catch the spirit of the text, and knew nothing of its landscape; and the portrait was by Samuel Laurence, also an English artist, whose fine head of Thackeray is well known, but who gave to Mr. Bryant a look that none of his friends ever recognized. By the critics, it is needless to say, these editions were generally welcomed in the warmest terms of praise.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH.

THE RISE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

A. D. 1855, 1856.

DURING his year of absence in the East, the political state of the nation had been growing more confused and untenable. Both the great leading parties, judicially blinded to the fact that the forms of society at the North and South were utterly incompatible with each other, had been expending their forces in futile attempts to reconcile them by compromises. They endeavored either to wink the causes of difference out of sight, or to heal the wounds, produced by an inevitable collision, by plasters of soft words. In their national platforms, intended to express the final convictions of the managers, they both of them insisted that the question of slavery ought not to be agitated, even while they were both of them rapidly disintegrating under the influences of that question. Of the great moral forces at work in the hearts of the people they seemed to be ignorant, or, at least, unmindful. The Whig Party, already to some extent dissolved, was still further broken by the advent of the Know-Nothings,* who contended that the naturalization laws should be so amended as to restrict suffrage to native-born citizens, or to aliens who had been long domiciled here, and that offices should be confined to native Americans, thus hoping to divert our domestic dissensions into another

* So called because their movements were at first kept secret.

channel. The Democratic party was hopelessly split into the Free-Soil and Hunker, or Conservative, factions, which hated each other more than they hated any common enemy; while the genuine friends of freedom were not yet sufficiently consolidated to have become an efficient organization. But the numbers of these were augmenting with every turn of events, and their coalition in a single body getting to be more and more compact.

Mr. Bryant, unwilling to separate himself from the Democratic Free-Soilers, with whom he had long co-operated, had allowed his journal, as we have seen, to follow their counsels, in supporting the Democratic candidate, Mr. Pierce, for the Presidency (1852). He seems to have cherished for some time the hope—almost always a delusive one—that his party might be reformed from within, or that the section of it with which he acted might gain such an ascendency in it, under the new administration, as to be able thenceforth to determine its character. But the course of the administration, which from the outset was even more decidedly pro-slavery than that of Fillmore, soon dissipated such expectations. He was made to see, if not so early as others, with more clearness and solidity of judgment in the end, that nothing was to be hoped from either of the old parties. If there could have been any doubt on that point, the action of Congress in its management of the Territories was conclusive. A bill, introduced by Senator Stephen A. Douglas, for the organization of Kansas and Nebraska, left the final decision in regard to the existence of slavery to the vote of chance settlers, or squatters; and, at the same time, as a sop to the South, repealed the Missouri Compromise, which prohibited slavery north of the line of 36° 30′ latitude, which opened the vast Northwest to the settlement of slave-holders.

Instead of quieting the storm, these concessions greatly added to its fury. They incited a civil war in Kansas, which brought the sections face to face with weapons in their hands. A battle of life and death was begun—of life to the republic and death to slavery, or of life to slavery and death to the re-

public, which could not be fought out fairly and squarely in the old ranks. A new party was needed, which had discernment enough to see the real issue, and courage enough to accept that issue in all its consequences. Mr. Bryant directed his most strenuous efforts in 1855 to the formation of such a party, and before the end of the year he had the satisfaction of seeing it in the field, fully equipped.

But, before pursuing its history further, the following incidents will find here an appropriate place. The first is a letter from Charles Sedgwick, describing a visit of himself and Miss Sedgwick to Roslyn.

"LENOX, JUNE 11, 1855: My visit to you was really refreshing. I came back in heart and head so much better than I went that I could hardly help thinking the Lord blessed everything and everybody at Roslyn, with one exception; He taketh no delight in the *legs* of a man, the very thing, and almost the only thing, one wants there, for brain and everything else is supplied on the spot. My children inquired of me about the house and place, and the youngest, of course, about the furniture; and all I could describe was something of the garden and the trees—grand and beautiful. Of the furniture, I said that everything seemed perfect; every possible want supplied, with no clutter of superfluities. The only thing I marvelled about was the piles of books on every side of the library, from floor to ceiling, so many (besides the Bible, Shakespeare, Bryant's Poems, and Mother Goose) that they were two or three deep on the shelves, and I could only account for it, in a man who does his own thinking, by supposing that you had such a tenderness for the calamities of authors that you had erected a private institution for some of those weak mortals for whom the State does not provide, where they might stand on a level with their superiors, and have the delicious feeling of keeping good company. I got soon reconciled to this multitudinous assemblage of the great and the little, observing that they kept silence, did not stop the conversation or lower its tone, or prevent an occasional nap in one of the easy chairs. Without a joke, I did greatly enjoy my visit to Roslyn, and everything in it, including the sweet Sunday service. Life there seemed as near right as I could fancy it; as well prepared as wisdom can prepare it for longevity;

and as well secured as righteousness can secure it against the pangs of survivorship."

Mr. Bryant alludes to this visit in a letter to Miss Sedgwick, a month later:

"NEW YORK, JULY 16th: Enclosed I send you a memorandum of yours which was found among some loose papers on our library-table at Roslyn. You must have missed the receipt for beer, at a time when nothing fermented, of a liquid kind I mean, can be bought and sold. We must go back to what we can make in our households. It is to be hereafter with drinks as it would be with tissues if all the cotton and woollen mills were stopped by law, and we were obliged to wear linsey-woolsey and other homespun cloths. The ferment will, I suppose, cause the planting of large apple-orchards again, and we shall hear the creak of the cider-mill with the return of the autumnal frosts; but, in the mean time, bushels of currants must be squeezed, and the beer-tub—shall I call it vat, for dignity's sake?—must take its old place among household furniture. I wish I could tell you how the receipt succeeds. I compounded some beer after it on Saturday, but I must wait till Saturday next before it is fit for drinking. The season is too warm for the happiest cerevisial fermentation. March and October, you know, are the accepted seasons in the old world—but why is October made to correspond to March?

"I see you have the *clematis grandiflora* among the names on your memorandum. If you want a flower which blooms later, more abundantly, and almost as splendidly, put down the *clematis Sieboldii*. It is just now in season. The flowers are remarkably persistent; they open before they are half grown, and you see the petals broadening and lengthening from day to day, growing more flower-like and delicate in texture, and brighter in color, for ten days together, or more—quite unlike most of the tribes which prepare their beauty in secret, and open when they have attained their full perfection, and then in a few hours are withered. There is something unsatisfactory about those flowers which fade so soon after they unfold. I can overlook the fault only in the *marvel of Peru;* the mirabilis, noon-sleep—the Spaniard calls it Don Pedro; it grows wild in Cuba, naturalized, I suppose. The Don is welcome to drop his blooms of one morning, he

repairs the waste so liberally, and comes out upon you with such glory and wealth of compensation the morning after. I have a variety of that flower, the perfumed sort, of which I must gather some of the seeds and send you. It was brought by Cole, the painter, from Sicily, and I have had it in my garden ever since; I never gather it without thinking of him; it is sweet and fragrant, like his memory.

"The visit which you and your brother made to us is one of the pleasant memories of Roslyn. We often speak of it, and wish, for your sakes, the weather had been finer, and, for our own, that your visit had been longer. I begin to think that railways, after all, are not the great things that some people pretend; they are smoky, noisy, giddy, dull, clumsy means of going from place to place. If we could only drop in upon you some afternoon, and return the same night or early the next morning, that would be something to talk of. My wife is quite as well as when you were here; too much like Martha—cumbered with many things. If I could only untwist the legs of that wretch Care from her neck and pitch him into—our pond, I would celebrate the event, perhaps, in a poem. I wonder if there is any medium between too much care and not enough to keep the mind in wholesome activity. I think that Sindbad, when he shook off the Old Man of the Sea, made thorough work of it, and walked, thereafter, without any burden on his shoulders.

"Roslyn is as fresh as May. The season has been showery, but, on the whole, agreeable—indeed, quite so. Every other day a shower, or, if not a shower, a mist going up in the night to water the earth, and disappearing with the sunrise. The children, who are quite well, are revelling among the latest cherries and the earliest gooseberries, both prodigiously fine this season. We have all of us gone through with 'Christie Johnstone' and 'Peg Woffington,' and find that they deserve all you and your brother said of them. The pleasure they gave us is one of the obligations under which your visit laid us."

In the diary of Mr. Bryant's late visit to England there is no mention of Rogers, whom he probably did not see, as the venerable poet was already suffering from that decay of age which brought about his dissolution in December of 1855; but, in recording the death in his journal, he took occasion to recall some of his reminiscences of their intimacy:

"The death of the poet Rogers," he said, "seems almost like the extinction of an institution. The world by his departure has one object the less of interest and reverence. The elegant hospitality which he dispensed for nearly three quarters of a century, and in which Americans had a large share, is brought to an end, and a vacuity is created which no Englishman can supply. Rogers loved to speak of his relations with Americans. 'Three American Presidents,' he used to say, 'have been entertained under my roof;'* and then he would enumerate, in his succinct way, the illustrious men, founders of our republic, or eminent in its later history, who had been his guests. He claimed an hereditary interest in our country. On the news of the battle of Lexington his father put on mourning. 'Have you lost a friend?' somebody asked him who saw this indication of sorrow. 'I have lost a great many,' was the answer; 'my friends in New England.'

"Rogers's breakfasts were the pleasantest social meetings that can be conceived of. There you met persons of every variety of intellectual and social distinction, eminent men and attractive women, wits, orators, dramatists, travellers, artists, persons remarkable for their powers of conversation—all of whom found themselves on the easiest terms with their venerable host, whose noon of life was reached in the last century. Even bores in his society, which discouraged all tediousness, and in the respect which his presence inspired, seemed to lose their usual character, and to fall involuntarily into the lively and graceful flow of conversation of which he gave the example.

"The following little incident will show with how good a grace he could welcome a stranger to his hospitable dwelling. On one occasion he met an American for the first time at a literary breakfast, at the table of Mr. Everett, who, while abroad, was never wanting in obliging and friendly attentions to his countrymen.† 'Where are you lodging?' he asked of the American. 'In St. James's Place,' was the answer. 'Come with me,' said Mr. Rogers, 'and I will show you the nearest way to St. James's Place.' He took his new acquaintance into that part of London which is sometimes called Belgravia, and pointed out to him the stately rows of spacious mansions lately erected to em-

* Probably the younger Adams, Fillmore, and Van Buren.

† This was Mr. Bryant himself.

bellish the great capital of England ; then, passing through the park of St. James, fresh in the beauty of early June, he arrived at the gate of a small garden. Taking a key from his pocket, he opened the gate, and, following a little walk among shrubbery and trees, on which innumerable sparrows were chirping, he entered a house by the back door, and introduced the American to his own home. After he had given him a little time to observe the objects of art which it contained, he dismissed him by the front door, which opened into St. James's Place. 'You see,' said he, 'that I have brought you by the nearest way to St. James's Place. Remember the house, and come to breakfast with me to-morrow morning.'

"The mention of sparrows in his garden reminds us of an anecdote of which they were the subject. 'I once used to feed sparrows,' said Mr. Rogers ; 'but one day, when I was throwing them some crumbs for their breakfast, a gentleman said to me : "Do you see those birds on the tree yonder, how they keep aloof, and do not venture down, while those on the ground are feasting at their leisure ? Those yonder are the females ; these which you are feeding are the gentlemen sparrows ; they keep their mates at a distance." Since that day I have fed sparrows no more.'

"Rogers began his poetical career early. One of his acquaintances was speaking of the little well-known song of his, familiar to our grandmothers :

> "'Dear is my little native vale :
> The ring-dove builds and warbles there ;
> Close by my cot she tells her tale,
> To every passing villager.
> The squirrel leaps from tree to tree,
> And shells his nuts at liberty.'

"'I wrote that song at sixteen years of age,' said Rogers. Yet, though the production of an immature age, it has all the better characteristics of his later poetry, and it shows how remarkably early they were acquired. In his 'Pleasures of Memory,' very elaborately composed, he adopted the carefully measured versification in fashion at the time it appeared, with its unvaried periods, its antithetic turns, and its voluntary renunciation of the power of proportioning the expression to the thought. In his 'Human Life,' a later and finer

poem, he shows that his taste had changed with the taste of the age; he broke loose from the old fetters, indulging in a freer modulation of numbers, though not parting with any of their harmony and sweetness, and studying a more vigorous and direct phraseology. 'Human Life' is the best of his longer poems, and that in which his genius is seen to the best advantage. It deals with life in its gentler and less stormy moods, whether of pleasure or of sadness, the sunshine and the shadows of common life. The poem is of a kind by which a large class of readers is interested, and contains passages which, once read are often recurred to, and keep their place in the memory.

"The illustrated edition of his poems is the only work of the kind with which we are perfectly satisfied. To illustrate adequately by the pencil the writings of an eminent poet is one of the most difficult undertakings in the world. The fine taste of Rogers in the arts and his intimacy with the greatest artists of his country gave him a great advantage in this respect; and we have heard that the designs which embellish that edition of his works were selected from a much larger number made for that purpose. In approaching the close of a life so much prolonged beyond the usual lot of man—a life the years of which circumscribed the activity of three generations—he contemplated his departure with the utmost serenity. The state of man after death he called the great subject, and calmly awaited the moment when he should be admitted to contemplate its mysteries. 'I have found life in this world,' he used to say 'a happy state; the goodness of God has taken care that none of its functions, even the most inconsiderable, should be performed without sensible pleasure; and I am confident that in the world to come the same care for my happiness will accompany me.'

"Mr. Rogers was of low stature—neither slightly nor sturdily proportioned; his face was rather full and broad than otherwise, and his complexion colorless. He always wore a frock-coat. 'I will not go to court,' he used to say, 'and for one reason among others, that I will not wear any other coat than this.' 'The other day,' he once added, 'I sent my clothes to the palace, and a man in them.' The man whom he meant was Wordsworth, who came to London as the guest of Rogers, in order to attend court at the bidding of the Queen, and to make his acknowledgments for the post of laureate, which

had been bestowed on him. On that occasion he wore the court suit of Mr. Rogers, whose guest he was.

"In conversation, Mr. Rogers was one of the most agreeable and interesting of men; he was remarkable for a certain graceful laconism, a neatness and power of selection in telling a story or expressing a thought, with its accessories, which were the envy of the best talkers of his time. His articulation was distinct—just deliberate enough to be listened to with pleasure, and during the last ten to twelve years of his life slightly—and but very slightly—marked with the tremulousness of old age.

"His ordinary manner was kind and paternal; he delighted to relate anecdotes illustrative of the power of the affections, which he did with great feeling. On occasion, however, he could say caustic things; and a few examples of this kind, which were so epigrammatic as to be entertaining in their repetition, have given rise to the mistake that they were frequent in his conversation. His behavior to the other sex was uncommonly engaging. He was on friendly terms with his eminent literary brethren, though they were enemies to each other; and, notwithstanding that his political opinions were those of the liberal school, his intimacies knew no party distinctions, and included men of the opposite sect." *

The organization of the new party referred to on page 81 met with the amplest success. Begun formally in Wisconsin, it was adopted in Ohio, under the leadership of Salmon P. Chase, where it carried the State election in October, 1854;

* Mr. Bryant seems to have produced a strong impression upon Rogers; for, a little while before the death of the latter, Mr. Bancroft, then our Minister to Great Britain, wrote of him to Mr. Bryant, thus: "Mr. Rogers came in a few days ago to see us. He is very old, as you know, but still full of interest in all that is about him. Of himself, without any lead on my part, he spoke of you; and he said, in the plainest terms, that he found more pleasure in reading your works than in any other living poet. He spoke unreservedly. I was so pleased to hear this from the countryman of Wordsworth and Moore that I told him I should communicate to you his good opinion. Upon this he bade me do so, and repeated, in the warmest terms, his admiration of your writings. I could not forbear running the risk of offending your modesty by letting you know how the poet of "Memory" and "Human Life" speaks of you. The tribute on his part was voluntary, and as hearty as possible."

and it required only the approval of the State of New York to impart to it solidity and bulk. That approval was heartily given at the Syracuse Convention (September, 1855), when the Free-Soilers and Liberal Whigs of the State dissolved their connection with the ancient parties, and joined in a common organization under the name of Republicans. A national recognition of the movement was added by the convention held subsequently at Pittsburg, and political antislavery began its career of irresistible conquest.

Earnestly as Mr. Bryant participated in this work, he could not be induced to take a personal part in it; his place, he thought, was at the desk, and not in conclaves and conventions. Regarded as one of the founders of the Republican party, he was widely solicited to attend the meeting at Pittsburg, but he now firmly declined. This letter to his brother John is an example of others written at the time.

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 15, 1856: I cannot go to Pittsburg. I do not like public meetings. I do not like consultations. I am surfeited with politics in my vocation, and when I go from home I cannot bear to carry them with me. If I were not a journalist, perhaps the case would be different. Then we have such a frightful winter, and I am anxious to seize the first moment of milder weather to see to some things at my place at Roslyn. The travel on the railways is often obstructed, and the ferries are choked with ice. That the consultations at Pittsburg will be among honest men is probable enough, but I am not a very firm believer in the honesty of parties. All parties include nearly all sorts of men, and the moment a party becomes strong the rogues are attracted to it, and immediately try to manage it. If they want its help for no other purpose, they want it to get into office, or perhaps simply to become notorious, which satisfies some people's ambition.

"As to Kansas, I am not sure that there will not be some blood shed. But, blood or no blood, I am quite certain that it will be a free State. The whole city is alive with the excitement of the Kansas news, and people are subscribing liberally to the Emigrants' Aid Society. The companies of emigrants will be sent forward as soon as

the rivers and lakes are opened—in March, if possible—and by the first of May there will be several thousand more free-state settlers in Kansas than there now are. Of course they will go well armed."

On the 29th of April, 1856, a great meeting was held in the Tabernacle in New York, "to oppose the measures and policy of the present national administration for the extension of slavery over territory embraced within the compact of the 'Missouri Compromise,' and in favor of repairing the mischiefs arising from the violation of good faith in its repeal, and of restoring the action and position of the federal government on the subject of slavery to the principles of Washington and Jefferson." At this meeting the following letter from Mr. Bryant was read:

"NEW YORK, *April* 28, 1856.

"GENTLEMEN: It may not be in my power to be present at the meeting at which you have done me the honor to request my attendence, but I fully agree with you as to the importance of a combined effort to assert the right of the great body of American citizens against the encroachments of an oligarchy—a class of proprietors who seek to subject all other interests, even the most sacred and dear, to their own.

"Even if the question were merely whether we should stand by our old neighbors—our friends and kinsmen, who have lately left us for a new home west of Missouri—the occasion would be a fitting one to call forth all our zeal and unite all our strength. If we desert them in their hour of need we shall be justly branded as cold-hearted, selfish, and cowardly. No nation in the history of the world was ever so faithless to the obligations of humanity as to be indifferent to the fate of the colonies it had planted. With the republics of antiquity it was a matter of course to answer the call of their colonies with instant sympathy and aid. England would cover herself with infamy if she were to allow one of her colonies, appealing to her for protection, to be brought by force under the sway of an absolute government. In the present case, the call made upon us is for a species of succor which will cost us no sacrifice, the cheap and peaceful aid of our votes. The votes of the great, prosperous, and powerful North are

all that is required to deliver the settlements on the Kansas from the combination of fraud and violence formed to wrest from them their rights and compel them to submit to laws which their representatives never enacted. We raise committees, we organize a system of charity when our benevolence is appealed to by the people of a foreign country in distress. Ought we to do less for our countrymen? Let us organize the entire region of the Free States, with such aid as we can obtain from the just and well-disposed of the Slave States, into a great association for breaking up the conspiracy against the rights of our countrymen and kindred at the West who look to us for help. Every generous feeling allies itself with the sense of justice in favor of the cause in which you are engaged. I am, gentlemen, with great regard, your obedient servant,

"WILLIAM C. BRYANT."

In these labors Mr. Bryant was earnestly supported by the approval and counsel of his old friend Charles Sedgwick, and it was a severe shock to him, when he heard, in the course of the summer, of the sudden death of that noble man. Writing to the sister, Miss C. M. Sedgwick, he said:

"ROSLYN, AUGUST 8, 1856: I did not hear till yesterday of the calamity which has overtaken you in the loss of your brother — I should say has overtaken us all, for it is the common misfortune of all who knew him. Your letter, which I did not receive till the 2d of August, just after I had sent off a letter to him, gave me reason to fear a fatal termination to his disorder; and one from Dr. Dewey, which came to my hands at the same moment, contained some strong expressions of concern on his account. But the death of those we love and wish to keep with us almost always falls upon us like a sudden blow, even when we are prepared for it by their gradual decline. Your brother seemed the very man who should be spared to the latest hour of human life to show how beautiful and lovely old age might be. One can scarcely imagine a spectacle more delightful than the serene evening of a life like his—the day of our existence in this sphere drawn out to a midsummer length, and ending in a genial sunset; and, as the truly good grow better and better as they grow older, the graces of his character heightened as he drew nearer to his reward.

"But this was not to be; and it seems almost a profane intermeddling with a grief like this to argue with it. Yet I may be allowed to suggest that the very virtues which make his friends grieve are the sources of their consolation, when they reflect that the more they have lost in him, the more he is sure to have gained. If few have lost so much as you, few for that very reason are more largely comforted.

"I was very much struck, not long since, with the answer of one to whom the prospect of life seemed uncertain, and whom I was endeavoring to console with the hope of a happier state of existence. 'It will be no heaven to me,' she said, 'if my friends are not there.' She was one who, if she departed then, must leave behind those who had been dearest to her in life. The delights of the next life, I am sure, are not selfish: they must be social. 'I go to prepare a place for you,' said our Saviour to his disciples. The good who precede us in death have all this office; it is their presence which will make a great part of the heaven for which we hope. Every passage of those we love into the next life prepares it for our reception, if we are worthy to be their companions.

"I hope I commit no impertinence in addressing you these words. My wife bids me write, and I trust to her instincts in a matter like this, when my own natural reserve would have dictated a silence which, if less demonstrative, would have been equally full of sympathy. She bids me say to you how deeply she takes part in this sorrow."

The principles adopted at Pittsburg met with his hearty concurrence; and when, a little while after, the Republican Convention at Philadelphia put Fremont and Dayton in nomination, as the standard-bearers of the new flag, he engaged in the campaign with all the ardor of a young man.* He was even sanguine of success, and wrote to his brother with an assurance of victory which the event did not justify:

"New York, October 14, 1856: As soon as I received your last, I caused its contents to be communicated to our Fremont Committee. Its account of the politics of Illinois was confirmed by other

* It was in the midst of the excitements of this contest that Mr. Preston Brooks, a member of the House of Representatives from South Carolina, made a brutal assault upon Charles Sumner, Senator from Massachusetts. In a debate that followed

letters in their possession. They said they should immediately take measures to send speakers into your State, which I believe has been done. We expect a favorable report from Pennsylvania to-morrow. The Buchanan men here are desponding, and it seems to be thought that if the State election goes against them, then the Presidential election will go against them also. I do not think that certain, however, though it is probable.

"There is good hope of New Jersey if the means can be provided of getting the Fremont voters to the polls; we stand the best chance of the two. They have a practice in New Jersey of providing con-

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in the House, words were passed between Mr. Anson Burlingame, of Massachusetts, and Mr. Brooks, which provoked a challenge to a duel with rifles. Canada was chosen as the place of meeting, but Mr. Brooks did not appear. Mr. Bryant, in anonymous communications to the "Evening Post," made fun of the failure in various bits of doggerel, of which this may be given as a specimen (July 24, 1856):

"BROOKS'S CANADA SONG.

"To Canada, Brooks was asked to go,
To waste of powder a pound or so;
He sighed as he answered, No, no, no,
They might take my life on the way, you know.
For I am afraid, afraid, afraid,
Bully Brooks is afraid.

"Those Jersey railroads I can't abide,
'Tis a dangerous thing in the trains to ride.
Each brakeman carries a knife by his side,
They'd cut my throat, and they'd cut it wide,
And I am afraid, afraid, afraid,
Bully Brooks is afraid.

"There are savages haunting New York Bay,
To murder strangers that pass that way;
The Quaker Garrison keeps them in pay,
And they kill at least a score a day.
And I am afraid, afraid, afraid,
Bully Brooks is afraid.

"Beyond New York, in every car,
They keep a supply of feathers and tar;
They daub it on with an iron bar,
And I should be smothered ere I got far.
And I am afraid, afraid, afraid.
Bully Brooks is afraid.

veyances for the voters at the expense of the general election fund of the party to which they belong. The Buchanan men will lose no votes for want of money to pay the carriage-hire of those who vote.

"New York we regard as perfectly safe for Fremont. The Fillmore party, at least their agents and leaders, brag high, but they either know better, or are grossly deceived themselves. Both they and the Buchanan party, their active men and journalists at least, make common cause against the Free-Soilers; though I think they will not come to a formal coalition, the mass of each party not being at all prepared for it. Such a measure would ruin them both.

"They would be glad to come to an understanding, I fully believe, but the people are in the way. We are keeping up the contest with the best hopes of success. A very large class of persons who never took any interest in elections before are zealous Fremonters now; among these are clergymen, and Quakers, and indifferents of all sorts. These men will swell the vote for Fremont in the choice of electors, but will not make much figure at the previous State elections."

Buchanan, the Democratic candidate, was elected in November, but, as there were three competitors in the field, the returns showed that he wanted more than three hundred thousand votes of a majority.

"Those dreadful Yankees talk through the nose;
The sound is terrible, goodness knows;
And, when I hear it, a shiver goes
From the crown of my head to the tips of my toes.
For I am afraid, afraid, afraid,
Bully Brooks is afraid.

"So, dearest Mr. Burlingame,
I'll stay at home, if 'tis all the same,
And I'll tell the world 'twas a burning shame
That we did not fight, and you're to blame.
For I am afraid, afraid, afraid.
Bully Brooks is afraid."

CHAPTER THIRTIETH.

A FIFTH VISIT TO EUROPE.

A. D. 1857.

When Mr. Bryant came back from the East, he supposed that his distant journeyings were over, and that he would never have occasion to cross the ocean again. But his beautiful seat on Long Island, though it brought so much happiness in many ways, could not secure the health of Mrs. Bryant, who for some years had been more or less seriously a sufferer. He took her to places reputed to be the most salubrious, but without avail. As a last resort, he was recommended to try a sea voyage, and a sojourn in the southern parts of Europe. Accordingly, on the 2d of May, 1857, they sailed for Havre, accompanied by their younger daughter and a companion of hers, Miss Estelle Ives, of Great Barrington.

As Mr. Bryant's letters tell pretty fully the story of this trip, I shall confine my narrative mostly to extracts from them:

"Great Barrington, April 24, 1857:* I am here with my wife on a visit to her sisters before sailing for Europe, to which I am to take her and Julia very shortly. Her health has not been so good as usual for the last two years, and last winter she suffered dreadfully with an attack of acute or inflammatory rheumatism. I am in hopes a sea voyage will give her strength, and therefore we go in a sailing

* To R. H. Dana, Esq.

packet, that there may be a fair trial of its effect. I write this as a kind of farewell letter, as I cannot take leave of you personally. May I not hope to hear from you sometimes when abroad? Your letters are among the very pleasantest I receive here, but in a strange country they will be more welcome still. . . . Your attack on the word 'commence' quite delighted me. 'Commence' is the torment of my life; I can hardly help rebuking roughly anybody who uses it in my hearing. If it be a young person, I am pretty sure to give a short lesson. Trench's book, of which you speak so favorably, I have looked into. I like all his books."

"SHIP WILLIAM TELL, IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL, MAY 30th:* We are now about a hundred miles from Havre, and I write this that I may put it in the post-office immediately on my arrival at that place. We have had for the most part not an unpleasant passage, though the captain calls it the most so he has made in his life at this season of the year, when a quick and agreeable passage to Europe may generally be depended on. My family have borne it very well.

"There are two matters about which it would have been well if I had spoken to you before I had left New York, that you might, if you pleased, make them the subjects of animadversion or speculation.

"I was informed, not very long before my departure, that the Mr. Delano who lives in China would be glad to give me some information in regard to the present condition of that country, and that he was in possession of some very interesting facts relating to the process of depopulation now going on among the Chinese race, both by means of their civil wars and their wars with other nations. I am not aware that this matter has at all attracted the attention of public interest, nor do I know whether the facts are of a nature to justify the idea of a gradual future decline of the Chinese race in numbers—a fate which has been endured by other large families of the human species; but the subject appeared one worthy of being looked into.

"The other matter is the state of our prison establishments on Blackwell's Island. Miss Sedgwick gave me some information in regard to it. I desired Mr. Hills to make some inquiries, the result of which he may possibly have communicated to you. Although women

* To Mr. John Bigelow.

are confined there, there is no matron at the place, which is saying about everything against it. The punishments are often barbarous, and the means of discipline are as bad as the punishments. These abuses I thought worthy of being inquired into, and, if there was no error in the representations I had heard, fully exposed, and made the subject of discussion and remonstrance till a reform was effected.

"HAVRE, JUNE 1st: We arrived here last evening after a slow and tedious voyage up the Channel. We are all well, and in comfortable quarters."

"PARIS, JUNE 18th: * I was near sending off my letter without telling you half the news. I saw Mr. Sumner two days since—the senator—who had just returned from a journey to the Pyrenees, and who was enraptured about the beauty of the scenery, as well as that of the valley of the Loire. An absence of eighteen days—such is the rapidity with which travelling is now performed on the railways—has enabled him to visit the city of Para, and the neighboring watering-places, to some of which he made his way on horseback over fields of snow, and also to go to chateau after chateau in middle France and on the Loire. He was looking exceedingly well—too fat, rather; in fact, he had lost something of the intellectuality of his expression, which was exchanged for a comfortable, well-fed look. He inquired very eagerly about the state of politics in our country, and seemed highly gratified to learn that everybody was dissatisfied with the decision in the Dred Scott case, and, although the court had declared negroes not to be citizens, nobody at the North but a few old bigots to judicial infallibility acknowledged the decision to be law. He talked a good deal about his health, which is slowly mending—and but slowly—a certain painful sensibility of the spine being still present, which until lately has hindered him from taking exercise by walking. He referred to several of his speeches like a man who is conscious that his opinions and his affairs are an object of interest to the public, and discussed with me the character of Senator Butler, the news of whose death had just been received.

"It is evident that Mr. Sumner must get well more rapidly than he has been doing for the past year to be able to go back to his seat

* To Miss Julian M. Sands.

in the Senate as a working member, or even an occasional talking member."

"HEIDELBERG, JULY 14, 1857:* You may possibly have some curiosity to know what has become of me since I left America, and may by chance be asked some questions about me and my family which you would not be unwilling to be able to answer. I have made with my family the tour of Belgium and Holland, and, coming down from Friesland by one of the Hanoverian railways to the Rhine, am resting for a few days in Heidelberg. We are the more disposed to suspend our somewhat rapid journey here on account of the heat of the weather, which is very great, one hot day succeeding another, with the interruption from showers, the sun being as intensely dazzling as our own.

"While in the northern part of Holland I hoped to obtain matter for a letter to the 'Evening Post' by a visit to the pauper colonies of Frederick's Oord and Willemstadt, in the province of Overyssel. Here are tracts of sandy soil covered with heath and shrubs, which, from the time when they were first formed from the bottom of the sea till now, have been abandoned to utter barrenness. The great calamity of Holland is pauperism, and somewhat more than thirty years ago a benevolent society was formed for the purpose of settling the poor who had become a public charge upon the waste lands of the kingdom, with a view of reducing them to cultivation. They purchased a tract of land, mostly uncultivated, in the province of Overyssel, where they made a beginning with some of the poor of Amsterdam who had been thrown upon the public charity. The colony thus established has now increased to a considerable community, yet it has made, I suppose, as much impression upon the vast mass of pauperism in Holland as the Colonization Society has made upon the mass of slavery in the United States."

(Here follows an account of the colonies, printed elsewhere.)†

"I could obtain no exact information of the profit and loss of this enterprise. 'These people,' said the book-keeper, 'cost the society a great deal. They come from the cities, unaccustomed to the work

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* To W. S. Thayer, an editor of the "Evening Post."

† "Sketches of Travel," vol. i.

we require of them, and often with families of very young children, who are of too tender an age to work. They must be subsisted, and their subsistence is a heavy charge.'

"There are now about four hundred families in the colony, numbering two thousand six hundred persons. To prevent the excessive growth of the community, and to confine the operations of the institution to their original object, all the young, on reaching the age of twenty-one, are obliged to leave it, as well as all the young who marry. As the older members drop off, their places are supplied by paupers from the towns. In the mean time, thousands of acres have been reclaimed from their primeval wild state and turned into productive fields."

"BAGNÈRES-DE-LUCHON, SEPTEMBER 3d:* When you were last abroad, you were in raptures with Interlaken. We too were there a day and a half, on leaving Grindelwald, but we were not tempted to remain longer, and are now at what we think a more delightful place. Interlaken lies beautifully among its glorious mountains and rapid rivers, but it was fiercely hot and full of company, and it looked like a dressy sort of place. So we bore away from it through the defiles of the Simmenthal to Vevay; from Vevay to Geneva, where we passed a week; from Geneva to Lyons, which we found almost as much rebuilt and embellished as Paris; from Lyons to Nismes, full of ancient monuments; from Nismes to Toulouse; and from Toulouse up the Garonne to this place in the heart of the Pyrenees, the only spot where I have been content to stop. The truth, however, is that both my wife and I are satisfied with looking at sights, and tired of tumbling about the world in search of them. So we have fixed ourselves at this finest spot—so they call it—in all the Pyrenees, where we have spacious lodgings, with meals from a neighboring hotel, and a woman who toils anxiously to earn a daily gratuity. Before us is one of the liveliest streets in the world; women in gay head-dresses made of red and yellow handkerchiefs, running about or chatting in groups; companies of people on horseback, with the mounted guides, setting out on excursions or returning; carriages arriving or departing; bathers in dishabille, going or coming; Spanish pedlers in knee-

* To Miss Christiana Gibson.

breeches and jackets of brown velvet, sandals, and hats ornamented with a feather; and, amid all this crowd, well-dressed men and women of all nations slowly promenading under the elms and lindens of the well-swept and sprinkled Cours d'Etigny. Luchon is so near the glaciers of the Pyrenees that it has a delightful temperature."

"BAGNÈRES-DE-LUCHON, AUGUST 27th:* We were all delighted the other day to get news from you and yours in the pleasant letters from your quiet home in Sheffield. They came to us in the midst of our journeyings through Switzerland, as we were drifting rapidly about in the currents of travel that rush through that country in the summer, and make it a scene of bustle, almost of tumult. And they brought with them an air of rest and old times, and of good talks on the banks of the Housatonic.

"I presented your letter to Mr. Chenevière, who received me very graciously, called on us twice, and gave me a volume of his discourses, which seem to me very good. He was astonished that one for whom he had conceived so high an esteem as his friend 'Dewey' should ask if he yet remembered him. I find him a little unhappy at the change which has taken place in Geneva. 'Your town,' I said to him, 'looks prosperous and flourishing.' He shook his head; 'material prosperity, I grant,' he answered. 'The radicals are a power, and material prosperity is all they think of. In other respects we are going back. They have shoved aside all the citizens distinguished for character and talent, and put the direction of affairs into the hands of inferior men—*et nous en sommes contre.* Then, party hatred is at times intensely fierce.' The truth is that one of those changes has been effected in Geneva which are taking place in all parts of the world where there is any element of freedom in the government. The popular party has extended the right of citizenship, which ten years since was the prerogative of those only who were of the national church, to persons of every communion, a measure which has broken down the Genevese aristocracy. It is very likely the change has been accomplished with some loss as well as gain, and that some pleasant old characteristics of the Genevese social life has been sacrificed. In pulling up the big weeds in my garden at Roslyn, it has often hap-

* To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

pened that I was obliged to take up with them some flowers—some useful plant which I would gladly have saved, but could not, its roots were so closely intertwined with the wild ones I must extirpate. But you would hardly recognize Geneva for the same place. Shallows of the lake filled up ; rows of stately houses, with broad streets between, built on the level space, thus usurped from the water ; massive quays and breakwaters, advancing into the lake, form a spacious port for the skippers ; the old fortifications of the town utterly demolished, and converted into public grounds and building lots, and Geneva overflows into the fields. I could hardly believe my eyes. The emancipated Catholics are building themselves a magnificent church on the west side of the Rhone, and priests, in cocked hats and long black skirts, go hobbling about in the city of Calvin.

"We saw some of the most remarkable points of Switzerland—Schaffhausen, Interlaken, Grindelwald, the Baths of Pfeffers, Zurich, Luzerne, Berne, Chamouni. My wife, you will be surprised to hear, went up Mount Righi, or rather was carried up, and tried to walk down, but gave out at about two thirds of the descent, and was obliged to call in another set of bearers, who took her down to Weggis very comfortably in another chair. Switzerland has sweltered nearly all summer in a torrid heat, but we had a cool journey from Geneva through Lyons, Nismes, and Toulouse, to this place. Here we are among the Pyrenees—in another Switzerland, with blacker rocks and darker verdure, corn and the vine growing higher up the mountains, and a livelier race of men and women, who chatter what is left of the ancient language of the Troubadours. From four o'clock in the morning until ten at night the street before our windows resounds with the talk of women in strange head-dresses, made of red and yellow handkerchiefs, and to the cracking of whips by the men, who sometimes startle us with a noise like that of the snapping of timbers in a great conflagration. Luchon is the most attractive summer residence I have seen on this side of the Atlantic. Here we have cool airs, extensive promenades of deep and ample shade, a fresh and flowery turf, rapid streams, cascades, clear brooks, picturesque mountains, and the greenest valleys winding away in almost every direction, and all this under the glorious sunshine of the south of France.

"A warm sulphur spring brings many invalids to the place ; and the beauty of the scenery and the agreeableness of the climate attract

thousands of others from every country of Europe, among whom, however, are very few English. I have not been content for my part to stop until I got here; but here we shall stay, at least till the rage of the dog-star is over."

"AUGUST 31st: Luchon is as pleasant as ever, and we have no thought of quitting it at present, only we begin to long for the sight of some familiar face. We all wish we could have a glimpse of your kind Sheffield faces. The next thing to a sight of your faces would be a sight of your letters. Tell Mary I do not understand what she means by sending me her 'respects,' nor do I recollect anything in my note addressed to her in New York which should have provoked it."

"MADRID, NOVEMBER 14th:* I thank you for the letter I had from you some time since, giving me an account of the state of things in America—that is to say, of the money market, for that is the great concern of the day, which takes the precedence even of politics. Even in these remote regions, where the failure of the New York merchants, and the breaking of the New York banks, and the fall of our railroad shares, have scarce any effect on individual interests, a great deal of curiosity is manifested as to the progress of the reaction, and the state of the American money market at the latest dates is as regularly chronicled as that of the rebellion in India. The commercial disasters of America are doubtless felt severely in their effects in Europe, but the Bank of England is able to stand pretty violent shocks; and as to the Credit Mobilier, though it has got to explode some time or other, the crash may be postponed for two or three years yet. These rich old countries do not feel the reaction of speculation so soon as we. In a deep sea it takes a longer time for a storm to stir the waters to the bottom than in a shallow one.

"We have had a comfortable stay in Madrid, though we had, at least the ladies had, rather a hard time in getting here. Our residence has already extended to four weeks, and in a day or two we think of setting out for the south of Spain, going by railway to Albacete, and thence to the sea-shore. I think we shall try, for a part of the journey, the method of travelling in a covered cart.

"Since we arrived here a new ministry has been appointed, with

* To John Bigelow, Esq.

Martinez de la Rosa, the poet, orator, and politician, who has almost reached the age of Nestor, at its head. The present administration, guided by Narvaez and Noudat, was shipwrecked in an attempt to destroy the liberty of the press. Martinez de la Rosa is a constitutional *Moderado*, a liberal conservative, who professes to respect the freedom of the press, though he holds in a good degree to the policy of repression, and thinks the *Progresistas* a set of premature reformers. Since he has been in power his ministry has been the object of constant attacks from the liberal and the ultra-liberal journals. The discussions of the press have certainly been conducted with the utmost freedom, so far as the composition of the ministry, its acts hitherto, and its future policy, are concerned. They are able, too, and often so sensible and enlightened, that I have been both surprised and delighted, though there was perhaps no occasion for surprise, for good sense is the same in all countries."

Mr. Bryant's travel in Spain was greatly facilitated by letters of introduction tendered him by Archbishop John Hughes, of New York, and addressed to Catholic clergymen, who were only too eager to procure him access to whatever he desired to see, particularly among the monasteries and churches. In Madrid he derived especial pleasure also from the attentions of Mr. and Mrs. Calderon de la Barca, whom he had formerly known in America. Madame Calderon was a Scotch lady of great intelligence, wife of a former Spanish Minister to the United States, whom she afterward accompanied to Mexico, of which she wrote a book, "Life in Mexico," commended by Prescott. Mr. A. C. Dodge, the American Minister, was polite to him, and no less so Mr. Horatio Perry, late Secretary of Legation, who, having married a Spanish lady of literary eminence, Miss Carolina Cornorado,* was able to present him to many persons distinguished in politics, literature, and society. Among these was Emilio Castelar, a young man of about twenty-four, but already a Professor of Philosophy in the University, and widely known for his learning, his liberality of opinion, and his eloquence.

* She is referred to in the Poetical Works, notes, vol. ii.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIRST.

A DELAY AT NAPLES.

A. D. 1858.

It was the design of the travelling party to spend the spring of 1858 on the shores of the Mediterranean, in the neighborhood of Naples; but on the way thither Mrs. Bryant was taken ill, and, after their arrival in Naples, confined for four months to her room. The following letters relate to this time.

"Naples, January 22, 1858:* . . . I ought to have taken more time to see Spain, and should have done so but for my family, who had to make their visit to Italy before our return. So I missed Toledo, Cadiz, Seville, and Cordova, and many other cities of Spain, as well as some entire provinces, with which I should be glad to have formed an acquaintance. After all, what is the use of trying to see everything? There will always remain some remarkable spot unvisited, and some curious neighborhood unexplored. It is enough to see what we can see conveniently, and to read about the rest. I am contented to have seen just a corner or two of Spain; for the rest of it I shall refer to the guide-books and the travellers. It is for this reason that I am satisfied with the mere glimpse I have had of Algeria. It would have been very well if I could have seen Constantina; it would have been well if I could have seen something of the interior, which is quite accessible by the excellent roads which the French have made;

* To John H. Gourlie, Esq.

but I had not time, and to repine because I did not see more would be as foolish as to fret because I did not know Sanscrit.

"I have been to-day at the Bourbon Museum here, and have seen, among the other things recently added to its collection of statuary, a bust of a very handsome Roman woman, which they call a portrait of Faustina, the consort of the Emperor Antoninus. It is manifestly a portrait; the features, however, have a certain degree of regularity, and the mouth and chin are beautifully formed; the expression is at once sweet and dignified. I was much struck with it.

"The hotel-keepers here say that they have seen but few American guests this winter, and I do not believe that as many Englishmen as usual have visited Italy. A great many Americans, as you know, hurried home on the news of trouble in the money market. They will come out, I suppose, next year. St. Peter's won't run away, and Vesuvius stands yet, and so does Naples, though I passed yesterday through a street where the houses had been so shaken and cracked by the late earthquake that they had been obliged to prop them with beams and posts. There was a great deal of mischief done by the earthquake in Calabria. The number of lives lost by the falling of the houses is variously stated, and no exact information can possibly be had concerning it under such a government as this; but the American Minister here says he thinks the probable number is about fourteen thousand. They talk of a hundred and fifty thousand persons left without a shelter in this bitter season, of people perishing by famine, and of dogs feeding on the bodies of the dead. I am glad you keep up the meetings of the Sketch Club so regularly in these hard times. If I had a pair of seven-league boots, I think I should come as often as any of you."

"NAPLES, JANUARY 22d:* The game of politics, as it has been played for a few years past, is as interesting as a game of whist. It is like some of those games which I used to play at when a boy, in this respect, that the principal players form new associates, take new partners, and discard old ones, so often that you have not time to get tired of those you act with. I really thought after the success of the Democratic party—the Buchanan party, I mean—in New York and in some

* To John Bigelow, Esq.

of the Western States, that Republicanism was on the decline; but the enthusiasm with which Douglass's championship of the case of Kansas has been seconded all over the northwest shows that the heart of the northern people is with those who resist the entrance of slavery into their territories.

"What you tell me of Buchanan's unpopularity does not surprise me. The man who could sign the Ostend Manifesto might commit almost any act of folly, or a series of them. When he had done that I thought he had finished himself. I thought he would never be President of the United States. Marcy, I have no doubt, thought so too; but the intrigues of a set of men who wanted a subservient man in the Executive chair prevailed at getting him the nomination. He is President, but he is no wiser than when he signed the Ostend Manifesto; and he is in a post where folly has more spectators, and a false step leads to more important consequences, and in which a man is at every moment called upon to do some act that gives proof of his real character."

"NAPLES, APRIL 18th:* My wife not being able to write, I am employed as her deputy. She was attacked while at Marseilles, in the latter part of December, with the catarrhal fever prevalent there. Becoming a little better, we brought her to Naples, where we thought she would recover rapidly; and, indeed, for a few days, she really seemed in the way of getting well. But it happened that we arrived at the beginning of an uncommonly cold season, such as no Neapolitan will own that he remembers, accompanied by fatal complaints which have swept off the people like the cholera, sometimes four hundred in a day. My wife was seized with the rheumatic fever prevalent here, which, after a time, put on the nervous or typhoid type, and brought her very low. It was our intention to pass no more than a month here; but we have been here nearly four months already, and so slowly does my wife regain her strength that we cannot yet fix upon the day of our departure. We should have been half way to England by this time if our original plan could have been executed. When we shall get there we do not pretend to guess. We must travel slowly; we must stop long enough in the more northern cities of Italy to let

* To Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Field, of England.

Julia and Miss Ives see what there is most worthy of notice, and we must get home some time toward the end of summer. The season is at length becoming very fine. The spring is beautiful at Naples beyond what it is farther north; this is the time when the orange-trees are full of ripe fruit and fragrant with blossoms; the blossoms, I assure you, are much sweeter than the fruit. The trees, putting out their young leaves, brighten the whole country with their verdure; for the fields are everywhere planted thickly with fruit-trees, and under them the crops of pulse and grain are already ripening. The city of Naples is not, however, the place to enjoy this beauty; one should be at Castellamare, or on one of the islands, and we cannot well leave the city.

The disappointment and anxiety of this delay at Naples were partly alleviated by the presence there of Mr. Robert Dale Owen, the American Chargé d'Affaires, who was glad to accompany Mr. Bryant on various trips to places of interest in the environs, and to introduce him to the choice English, American, and Italian societies the city furnished. Mrs. Anna Jameson, whom he had known in America; Mr. John P. Kennedy, author of "Swallow Barn"; Mrs. Robert Sedgwick and her daughters; Miss Anna Brewster, and others, mostly old acquaintances, were also there. During these dreary days and nights, it appears by his Diary, he still found time to read—the greater part of Dante, Roscoe's "Lorenzo," Lady Morgan's "Salvator Rosa," Macnish's "Life of Moir," Kugler's "History of Painting," Isaac Taylor's "Physical Theory of Another Life," Myer's "Lectures on Great Men," Fanny Kemble's Poems, Pascal's "Thoughts," Nicole's "Pensées," Schlegel's "Italian Art," and two volumes of Mr. Owen in manuscript—one the "Autobiography of his Father"—and another on Spiritualism. Without these, he says, the weariness would have been insupportable. Toward the latter part of the time he was rejoiced by the arrival in Naples of the Rev. R. C. Waterston, with his wife and daughter Helen. They had met before in Boston, and more recently in Heidelberg, and an

intimate and enduring friendship had sprung up between them. Recalling these intimacies, Mr. Waterston writes:

"We met in Europe first at Heidelberg, and I never can forget the evenings we spent there in the shadow of the old castle, and in strolls and drives about the neighborhood. Two angels were with us there, now passed away—Mrs. Bryant and Helen." Elsewhere he adds: "As we walked together under the shadow of the 'Rent Tower,' in the famous garden of 'Elizabeth,' wife of the Count Palatine, and along the 'Terrace,' which commands one of the most magnificent views in Europe, I felt that, admirable as were the choicest of Mr. Bryant's productions, he was himself far more than the best that had proceeded from his pen. In him there was robust nobleness, with quiet repose; variety and completeness; intuitive insight, and affluence of knowledge. Not under any circumstance was there the faintest approach to ostentation or display, but, as occasion required, all needed information was at hand, and always in the most agreeable manner. Mr. Bryant was a man of close observation and exactness. With regard to trees and plants, he had the accuracy of a naturalist. The history and character of every shrub were familiar to him, while with these was a sense of beauty and harmony that quivered through his whole being, an emotion all the deeper because of its calmness. Outward objects were reflected from his mind like images in a tranquil lake, but not like those destined to pass away. He absorbed them, and they became his own. His eye embraced everything; the stupendous ruin, the winding river, the encircling mountains, the motion of birds, their varied songs, the clouds sailing through the heavens, and each floating shadow on the landscape. Both at Heidelberg and along the Neckar we climbed the hills, wandering among ancient castles and picturesque ruins, and bringing away memories never to be forgotten. I felt then, as I do now, that no man living could be more keenly alive to the most delicate aspects of external nature, or could interpret with truer wisdom her hidden meaning." *

His Muse was not wholly inactive in the midst of his painful preoccupations at Naples. He completed there his "River

* From "A Tribute," read to the Massachusetts Historical Society, June 13, 1878.

by Night," which had been suggested by a twilight ramble along the banks of the Hudson; the long illness of his wife inspired "The Sick-Bed," in which the gentle words she spake are put in very sweet rhymes; and, after her recovery, "The Life that Is," a pendant of "The Future Life," welcoming her back to all she would not leave. It was also in one of his many strolls along the Bay of Naples that he communed with the water nymphs in "A Day-Dream," as sweet and sorrowful as the murmurs he heard from their coral lips. In all these pieces there is a seriousness even beyond his wont, of which Mr. Waterston gives us this further account:

"I had the privilege also of being with Mr. Bryant at Naples. He first showed me the grave of Virgil. We looked from that beautiful city out over its world-renowned bay. I listened to his inspiring words upon Italy, for whose future he cherished an unfailing hope. But there were other thoughts that were pressing upon his mind. Mrs. Bryant had been suddenly prostrated by serious illness, and he had watched over her through many anxious weeks. . . . At this time (April 23d) I received from him a note stating that there was a subject of interest upon which he would like to converse with me. On the following day, the weather being delightful, we walked in the Villa Reale, the royal park or garden overlooking the Bay of Naples. Never can I forget the beautiful spirit that breathed through every word he uttered, the reverent love, the confiding trust, the aspiring hope, the rooted faith. Every thought, every view, was generous and comprehensive. Anxiously watching, as he had been doing, in that twilight boundary between this world and another, over one more precious to him than life itself, the divine truths and promises had come home to his mind with new power. He said that he had never united himself with the Church, which with his present feelings he would most gladly do. He then asked if it would be agreeable to me to come to his room on the morrow and administer the Communion, adding that, as he had not been baptized, he desired that ordinance at the same time. The day following was the Sabbath, and a most heavenly day. In fulfilment of his wishes, in his own quiet room, a company of seven persons celebrated together the Lord's Supper. With hymns, selections from the Scripture, and devotional exercises, we went back in

thought to the 'large upper room' where Christ first instituted the Holy Supper in the midst of his disciples. Previous to the breaking of bread, William Cullen Bryant was baptized. With snow-white head and flowing beard, he stood like one of the ancient Prophets, and perhaps never since the days of the Apostles has a truer disciple professed allegiance to the Divine Master. . . . After the service, while standing at the window looking out with Mr. Bryant over the bay, smooth as glass (the same water over which the Apostle Paul sailed, in the ship from Alexandria, when he brought Christianity into Italy), the graceful outline of the Island of Capri relieved against the sky, with that glorious scene reposing before us—Mr. Bryant repeated the lines of John Leyden, the Oriental scholar and poet—lines which, he said, had always been special favorites of his, and of which he was often reminded by that holy tranquillity which seems, as with conscious recognition, to characterize the Lord's Day.

"'With silent awe, I hail the sacred morn,
That scarcely wakes while all the fields are still;
A soothing calm on every breeze is borne,
A graver murmur echoes from the hill,
And softer sings the linnet from the thorn.
Hail, light serene! Hail, sacred Sabbath morn!'"

The subjoined extracts from his private letters describe his progress homeward:

"ROME, MAY 18, 1858:* As soon as my wife could be moved, we had her taken in a sedan chair to other lodgings, for those we were in were situated, though in the pleasantest and apparently most desirable, yet in the most unwholesome, part of Naples. At length she was well enough to take short drives, and we went with her to Castellamare, a pleasant and healthful place on the mountain-side by the sea-shore south of Vesuvius, where we passed a week much to her advantage. Our next move was to Rome, and we reached it by easy journeys, which have seemed to do Frances a great deal of good. We cannot stay here long, as the weather is becoming warm, and we want

* To J. H. Bryant, Esq.

to go to England, whence we shall in all probability sail for the United States some time in August.

"We regret much not to have been able to pass more time in Rome, as it was our original intention to do. You have read, I suppose, the account of our journey to Spain, as I gave it in letters written for the 'Evening Post.' They contain about all I could say concerning the country. Our visit to Spain was an exceedingly interesting one, though the facilities for travelling are not much better than they are between Illinois and Oregon. Since I left Spain I have been very much occupied with taking care of Frances. I am inclined to think that if she had had an allopathic physician I should not have brought her alive out of Naples, and that for her recovery I have to thank the gentle methods of the new system. Naples is the same noisy place, full of beggars and blackguards, that it was twenty-three years ago, when I first saw it, and it is just as badly governed. There is no salvation that I can see for the people of the Two Sicilies, as the kingdom is called, but in the chance of having a good king. They seem to me too demoralized and ignorant (all classes being ignorant of what would be most important for them to know); to be better governed under a freer form of government than that they now have; perhaps, however, it would be wise to try.

"Rome certainly looks better with every visit I pay to it. The streets are cleaner, and there is always some new public work completed for the embellishment of the city, or the convenience of those who inhabit it. Mr. Chapman, the artist, also tells me that the police is better than it was, and he thinks the people are growing more intelligent. It does not appear to me, however, that much is gained by the increase of intelligence, unless the people are admitted to some share in the administration of public affairs. If they are not, the increase of intelligence makes them discontented, restless, and unhappy. I have been watching with interest the proceedings of Congress in the Kansas affair, but, the moment the House agreed to a Committee of Conference with the Senate, I took it for granted that a majority for the Lecompton constitution had been bought over. The question is settled before this time; but, as my newspapers from New York are only to the 24th of April, they leave the matter yet in the hands of the Committee. Whatever Congress may do, the Free State Party are destined eventually to triumph."

"CIVITA CASTELLANA, MAY 29, 1858:* At this moment we are at Civita Castellana, in the Roman states, just one day's journey from Rome, having left the Eternal City this morning. This town stands on rocks, enclosed by ravines—three of them—each with its little stream, deep chasms with perpendicular walls, the projections of which sprout luxuriantly with shrubs—among them the privet and elder-bush in bloom spot the green with white. I have just been out upon a lofty bridge spanning one of these ravines. On one side I looked down upon women, who looked like pigmies, washing beside the stream; and, on the other, upon a herd of black swine, apparently no larger than mice. From our windows we have a view of the Sabine mountains, and of Magliano, a Sabine town overlooking the valley of the Tiber. On the other side towers the blue Soracte.

"We passed thirteen days in Rome, and were all sorry to leave it, the only drawback was that, the formality of calls somewhat abridged the time that the girls had for seeing the wonders of the place. But the weather was delightful, the gardens and surrounding country in bloom, and Rome had put on its brightest aspect.

"We are now on our way to Florence, whence we shall proceed through Venice to Paris, and so to England, intending to go home about the close of summer. Should we go to Scotland, it will be a great pleasure to us to meet your mother and sister there.

"My wife bids me say that we are under the greatest obligations to you for the kind interest you take in Fanny and her children. She thanks you also, a thousand times, for the warm sympathy you express for her condition when you had the last news from her. There is this advantage in the unmarried state, that it allows the affections to expatiate and extend themselves, and you avail yourself of that advantage in the fullest manner."

In Rome, Mr. Bryant was once more in the midst of his favorite companions, the artists—Crawford, Story, Gibson, Chapman, Miss Hosmer, Page, Terry, and others. Miss Fredrika Bremer, whom he had entertained at home, was also there. At Mr. Story's he met, for the first time familiarly, with Nathaniel Hawthorne, and afterward called upon him

* To Miss C. M. Gibson, of Edinburgh.

at his rooms. Hawthorne's impressions of the interview are worth transcribing: *

"MAY 22d: Yesterday, while we were at dinner, Mr. Bryant called. I never saw him but once before, and that was at the door of our little red cottage in Lenox, he sitting in a wagon with one or two of the Sedgwicks, merely exchanging a greeting with me from under the brim of his straw hat, and driving on. He presented himself now with a long white beard, such as a palmer might have worn as the growth of his long pilgrimages, a brow almost entirely bald, and what hair he has quite hoary; a forehead impending, yet not massive; dark, bushy eyebrows and keen eyes, without much softness in them; a dark and sallow complexion; a slender figure, bent a little with age, but at once alert and infirm. It surprised me to see him so venerable; for, as poets are Apollo's kinsmen, we are inclined to attribute to them his enviable quality of never growing old. There was a weary look in his face, as if he were tired of seeing things and doing things,† though with certainly enough still to see and do, if need were. My family gathered about him, and he conversed with great readiness and simplicity about his travels, and whatever other subject came up, telling us that he had been abroad five times, and was now getting a little homesick, and had no more eagerness for sights, though his 'gals' (as he called his daughter and another young lady) dragged him out to see the wonders of Rome again. His manners and whole aspect are very particularly plain, though not affectedly so; but it seems as if in the decline of life, and the security of his position, he had put off whatever artificial polish he may have heretofore had, and resumed the simpler habits and deportment of his early New England breeding. Not but what you discover, nevertheless, that he is a man of refinement, who has seen the world, and is well aware of his own place in it. He spoke with great pleasure of his recent visit to Spain. I introduced the subject of Kansas, and methought his face forthwith assumed something of the bitter keenness of the editor of a political newspaper while speaking of the triumph of the administration over the free-soil opposition. I inquired whether he had

* "French and Italian Notes." Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1879.

† He was tired because of his long vigils at Naples.

seen S——,* and he gave a very sad account of him as he appeared at their last meeting, which was in Paris. S——, he thought, had suffered terribly, and would never again be the man he was; he was getting fat; he talked continually of himself, and of trifles concerning himself, and seemed to have no interest for other matters; and Mr. Bryant feared that the shock upon his nerves had extended to his intellect, and was irremediable. He said that S—— ought to retire from public life, but had no friend true enough to tell him so. This is about as sad as anything can be. I hate to have S—— undergo the fate of a martyr, because he was not naturally of the stuff that martyrs are made of, and it is altogether by mistake that he has thrust himself into the position of one. He was merely, though with excellent abilities, one of the best of fellows, and ought to have lived and died in good fellowship with all the world.

"Bryant was not in the least degree excited about this or any other subject. He uttered neither passion nor poetry, but excellent good sense, and accurate information, on whatever subject transpired; a very pleasant man to associate with, but rather cold, I should imagine, if one should seek to touch his heart with one's own. He shook hands kindly all round, but not with any warmth of gripe, although the ease of his deportment had put us all on sociable terms with him."

Hawthorne and Bryant were thrown together again, a few days later, in Florence, at the house of the Brownings, whom Mr. Bryant saw, I think, for the first time. Again I quote Hawthorne's words:

"We were not the only guests. Mr. and Mrs. E——, Americans, recently from the East, and on intimate terms with the Brownings, arrived after us; also Miss F. H——, an English literary lady, . . . and lastly came the white head and palmer-like beard of Mr. Bryant with his daughter. Mr. Browning was very efficient in keeping up conversation with everybody, and seemed to be in all parts of the room and in every group at the same moment; a most vivid and quick-thoughted person, logical and common-sensible, as, I presume,

* Charles Sumner, doubtless.

poets generally are in their daily talk. Mr. Bryant, as usual, was homely and plain of manner, with an old-fashioned dignity, nevertheless, and a remarkable deference and gentleness of tone in addressing Mrs. Browning. I doubt, however, whether he has any high appreciation either of her poetry or her husband's, and it is my impression that they care as little about his. We had some tea and some strawberries, and passed a pleasant evening. There was no very noteworthy conversation, the most interesting topic being that disagreeable and now wearisome one of spiritual communications, as regards which Mrs. Browning is a believer, and her husband an infidel. Mr. Bryant appeared not to have made up his mind on the matter, but told a story of a successful communication between Cooper, the novelist, and his sister, who had been dead fifty years. Browning and his wife had both been present at a spiritual session held by Mr. Hume, and had seen and felt the unearthly hands, one of which had placed a laurel wreath on Mrs. Browning's head. Browning, however, avowed his belief that these hands were affixed to the feet of Mr. Hume, who lay extended in his chair, with his legs stretched far under the table. The marvellousness of the fact, as I have read of it, and heard it from other eye-witnesses, melted strangely away in his hearty gripe, and at the sharp touch of his logic; while his wife, ever and anon, put in a little gentle word of expostulation.

"Mrs. Browning's health does not permit late hours, so we began to take leave at about ten o'clock. I heard her ask Mr. Bryant if he did not mean to revisit Europe, and heard him answer, not uncheerfully, taking hold of his white hair, 'It is getting rather too late in the evening now.' If any old age can be cheerful, I should think his might be; so good a man, so cool, so calm, so bright, too, we may say. His life has been like the days that end in pleasant sunsets. He has a great loss, however—or what ought to be a great loss—soon to be encountered in the death of his wife, who, I think, can hardly live to reach America. He is not eminently an affectionate man. I take him to be one who cannot get closely home to his sorrow, nor feel it so sensibly as he gladly would; and, in consequence of that deficiency, the world lacks substance to him. It is partly the result, perhaps, of his not having sufficiently cultivated his emotional nature. His poetry shows it, and his personal intercourse, though kindly, does not stir one's blood in the least."

Whether Mr. Hawthorne was correct in his conjecture as to the several poets' appreciation of one another's poetry, I have not the means to say; but Mr. Bryant, I know, conceived a strong personal attachment for both Mr. and Mrs. Browning, and afterward, when they met again in Paris, he passed a good deal of time in their company.* His reminiscences of Mrs. Browning were particularly delightful, but he always spoke of her in a vein of tenderness that was touching.

At Florence he also fell in with Walter Savage Landor, a veteran poet, more aged even than himself, and with whom he so far agreed in political sentiment and the love of ancient learning that their intercourse, though brief, was exceedingly pleasant. Mr. Bryant often referred to wise words that he gathered from Landor's conversations.

"PARIS, JULY 15th:† The more I have thought of the Regency of the University, the more I am disinclined to accept it; and I therefore enclose a letter, which, as there does not seem to be anybody else to write to about it, you will oblige me by using as a formal refusal of the honor and the trouble.‡

"With regard to ascertaining the real character of a vessel which runs up the American flag, I do not well see how there can be much difference of opinion among sensible and honest men, and the 'Evening Post' has taken precisely the same course in regard to it which I should have done. The doctrine that a pirate has a right to exemption from arrest if he will only run up the American flag is an absurd, monstrous, and impudent assertion of impunity for crime, and always, whether put forth by Cass, Stevenson, or Webster, fills me with the intensest disgust. Reduced to plain English, this was the purport of Stevenson's demand on the British government in a correspondence which he had with it. That the British fleet have not a right to stop

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* I was in hopes to secure Mr. Browning's recollections of this intercourse, of which I learned from friends that he always speaks with great pleasure, but my communication to him must have miscarried, as it procured no reply from him.

† To John Bigelow, Esq.

‡ The appointment of Regent of the University of New York State had been offered him.

a vessel which is known to be an American trader is true enough, but the running up of an American flag gives no authentic information on that point. If the British or Spanish slave-trader can escape so, he will always run up the American flag, and the British fleet can never capture a British vessel engaged in any sort of piracy. But these are matters so clear as to be truisms."

"PARIS, JULY 16th:* I cannot leave Paris without writing to you again. My last was written to you from Florence, expressing the hope that we might get a line from you at Venice or at this place, since which time we have only heard from you indirectly. We have very, very often talked of you, and wondered what was the condition of your dear child, and at one time consoled ourselves with the hope that your daughter was better, and that you had left Naples with her; but this hope was overthrown by hearing, since we came here, that a letter from you had been received dated the 29th of June, and that Helen was still very low. My wife bids me say that she was ill at Naples a longer time than your daughter has been, and that she did not think that she should recover, and yet she was raised up. I know that you cannot often write with so much anxiety pressing upon you; but if at any time you would communicate to us in the briefest manner, or desire any of your friends to whom you write to communicate to us any intelligence respecting your daughter's case, there are none who would receive it with a deeper sympathy.

"Next week we all leave France for England. From England, we expect to go home the latter part of August, perhaps the twenty-first."

The young person for whom Mr. Bryant here evinces so tender an interest had completely won his admiration, during their brief intercourse at Naples, by her rare amiability and culture, as well as by the graces of her person and manners. But he was not destined to see her again, and, on hearing of her death while he was in England, he wrote as follows:

"STRATFORD UPON AVON, AUGUST 11, 1858:† The news of the termination of Helen's illness has just reached us, and we all share in

* To the Rev. R. C. Waterston. † To the same.

the depth of your sorrow, for Mr. Flower and his family* had learned to love her during your visit last summer.

"We share largely in the grief which this calamity has brought upon you; yet, knowing your daughter as we did, we share also in the consolation so dear to you both, that she was prepared in an eminent degree for that great Transfiguration which awaits the good in another life. For the wound inflicted on your spirits by so great a calamity, there can be no balm like this. Perhaps the early unfolding of her mental powers and the early ripeness of her moral and religious nature were presages that she was soon to be called to a better world, and indications that the discipline of life had, for her, accomplished its end and was no more needed. . . ."

In the published volume of Mr. Bryant's letters from Spain, he has the following notice of Helen:

"Some of the pleasantest as well as saddest recollections of my present visit to Europe relate to this charming young person. It was at Heidelberg, a little more than a year ago, that I met Mr. Waterston, his wife, and daughter—an only child. I confess I felt a degree of pride in so magnificent a specimen of my countrywomen as this young lady presented; uncommonly beautiful in person, with a dignity of presence and manner much beyond her years. Wherever she went, it was easy to see she was followed by looks of admiration. Her mind was surprisingly mature for her time of life. She was kind, true, sympathetic, religious, and overflowing with filial affection; the most dutiful as well as the most beloved of daughters.

"After we left Heidelberg, we did not meet again until, after a winter's residence in Rome, her parents brought her to Naples. . . . Soon afterward she was taken ill, and she passed away in what might be almost taken for a beatific vision. . . ."

"NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 9th:† I brought back Mrs. Bryant nearly as well as she was when I carried her off to Europe, and gaining strength so steadily that I have great hopes of soon seeing her even better than she was there. Julia came home in fine health and spirits. The voyage was one of the smoothest ever made; soft airs

* With whom he was staying at Stratford.

† To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

and a quiet sea; and the passengers pleased with the weather, the ship, and each other. We passed a month in England, where we heard a good many inquiries about you, and answered them, I think, to the general satisfaction.

"Mr. Edwin Field wrote on our account to Mr. Flower, of Stratford, and the result was an invitation to 'The Hill,' the name of his place. We went, and passed two days there very pleasantly. You were freshly remembered in the family, who have been noted for their hospitality to Americans. Both Mr. Field and Mr. Flower are of those who grow more conservative as they grow older, a common case, as Mr. Flower had the good fortune to become rich, which is another makeweight in favor of conservatism. He is thinking of going into Parliament.

"Nine days we were at Mr. Ferdinand Field's, near Evesham, a little town in a pleasant agricultural district of Worcestershire, where cucumbers flourish in the open air, and the grape ripens on the south side of walls. Here my wife gained strength every day, and I took walks with our agreeable host, for very agreeable I found him, on the neighboring hills. But I cannot say that I much liked the peep into English life which this brief residence gave me. So many sets and classes of people, each jealous of intrusion from below, and anxious to get admission into the class above. At Birmingham, we were the guests of Mrs. Alfred Field; her husband at this moment is in the United States. They live in a nice little village called Edgbaston, just out of the smoke and jar of the town, and from this place Julia and I made an excursion to Litchfield and Aston Hall with Mrs. Field for our cicerone. Near to Edgbaston is Shenstone's famous place, the Leasowe's, now in possession of Mr. Mathews, who has put it in neat order again, bringing back the rivulets that were stagnating into marshes to their ancient channels, and opening the old paths in the dark woods by their side. I walked over it with a Brummagen gentleman and the proprietor. But I did not mean when I began this letter to give you a history of our travels. They are over for the present."

The "peep into English life" to which this letter alludes was not the only one he obtained in the course of his many visits to England, but he never seems to have relished it greatly.

Individual Englishmen whom he encountered he liked very much, but English society seemed to him so pervaded by a feeling of deference to mere rank that he was offended by the tone of it, and he tried to confine his social intercourse to circles in which his self-respect was not likely to be molested.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SECOND.

ON THE EVE OF THE CIVIL WAR.

A. D. 1859.

As Mr. Bryant's principal colleague went away to Europe soon after his own return, he was left alone to carry on the political battle; and a terrible battle it was. The slave power was still dominant and aggressive; it controlled all branches of the Federal Government, even the Supreme Court, which by a decision in the case of Dred Scott denied all rights of citizenship to negroes descended from slaves; it dictated still to both the great parties; and it was ably represented in Northern pulpits and still more ably in the Northern press. But its ascendency was qualified by an opposition more broad and sturdy than it had ever before encountered. In Congress, its majorities were diminishing; in the Lower House, on some burning questions, they had been lost; and, while the old parties were rapidly yielding ground to the new party, the churches, those strongholds of all conservatisms, even bad ones, were breaking into pieces.

On the part of the slaveists, the fight was carried on with the desperation of men who had always been used to conquer, but who now saw their fortunes waning. Their threats of a dissolution of the Union in the event of further defeats grew louder and fiercer, and they had a visible effect upon the trading and timid classes of the North. "Save the Union!" was raised into an almost popular cry. All through the sum-

mer, the "Black Republicans" were denounced as the enemies of the integrity of the nation. Union meetings were held everywhere, which were addressed in the most fervent language by eminent merchants, lawyers, and clergymen. Toward the close of the year, the controversy was still further excited and embittered by the invasion of the State of Virginia by "John Brown of Ossawattomie," who with fourteen white men and five negroes undertook to release the slaves of the State. His resort to arms, to accomplish his purposes, brought additional odium upon the more cautious and moderate policy of the Republicans.* But they did not shrink from the prosecution of their work. They were no longer to be frightened, and their zeal increased with the emergency.

Mr. Bryant was not of the number of those who thought the conflict a superficial one; he had looked too closely at its underlying causes to be deceived as to its seriousness; he saw in it the wrestle of two antagonistic civilizations, which could not terminate until one or the other had proved victorious; but he hardly contemplated, I think, an immediate and protracted civil war. His confidence in the power of truth and justice to make themselves felt ultimately in a democratic society, without resort to violence and rupture, was not easily shaken. To maintain a firm front in the presence of the South, was all that was needed to turn it from its purposes. "The people of the South," he argued, "are the spoiled children of the nation, who require to be rebuked, not petted."

* The "Evening Post," without approving the raid, could not but admire, as many others did, the intrepid and manly bearing of the old zealot during his imprisonment and trial and in the touching scenes of his execution. On the day of his death, one of its editors wrote an article predicting that in less than ten years the Virginians would raise a monument to the man whom they punished as a criminal. This was thought to be a somewhat rash prophecy, and was not printed. But it was fulfilled in a way that no one then expected, in less than five years, when the Massachusetts soldiers sang the popular war-song—

"John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
But his soul is marching on,"

on the very spot on which he was hanged.

"For the last fifteen years, the slaveholders have had their own way in the councils of the nation. The affairs of the Government have been managed in their interest; their wishes have been gratified so far as the Executive and the majority of Congress could gratify them; the laws have been made and administered as they would have them made and administered; their partisans have been placed on the federal bench; every ministerial office has been bestowed upon their creatures; their schemes of policy have been directly adopted by the Federal Government, or, when not directly adopted, connived at, favored, and promoted in every possible manner by the Government. The journals which speak as the organs of the ruling party are all in the slave interest.

"If this were the proper method of putting the North and South at amity with each other, the work would have been accomplished long ago. If, by giving the country a government devoted to the slave interest, the jealousies and animosities between the different quarters of the country could have been laid asleep and forgotten, the four last administrations should have done it so effectually that slavery, as a topic of dispute between the people who inhabit different parts of the United States, would be no more thought of.

"So far is this from being the case, that the longer the Government follows this policy, the more unreasonable these jealousies and the fiercer these animosities become. In the whole series of our federal administrations, no one has been so absolutely devoted to the slave interest as that of Mr. Buchanan; and certainly under no administration has the ill-humor of the South been exasperated to such a pitch. There has never been a time when the people of the North, adventuring to show themselves in the Southern States, have been so shamefully treated. There is neither liberty of speech nor of press at the South for a citizen of the Northern States, nor even for citizens of the slave States who do not avow themselves to be the partisans of slavery. From a state of things which permitted free discussion on this subject, the slave States have lapsed into an oligarchical tyranny, as absolute as the monarchical despotism in Austria. Men have been shot, hanged, tarred and feathered, exiled, expelled by force, on the bare suspicion of not being friendly to slavery.

"The slave interest is a spoiled child; the Federal Government is its foolishly indulgent nurse. Every thing it has asked for has been

eagerly given it; more eagerly still if it cries after it; more eagerly still if it threatens to cut off its nurse's ears. The more we give it the louder its cries, and the more furious its threats; and now we have Northern men writing long letters to persuade their readers that it will actually cut off its nurse's ears if we exercise the right of suffrage, and elect a President of our own choice, instead of giving it one of its own favorites."

Mr. Bryant was disposed to favor the nomination of Mr. Chase as the Republican candidate for the Presidency, not liking the pliant politics of Mr. Seward, who was a more general favorite, but this preference was turned by an apparently unimportant incident. Never an orator, in the school sense, he had yet, in the later years of his life, acquired the art of speaking pleasantly in public assemblies. When he first attempted it, I remember, he failed utterly in spite of his earlier experiences at the bar; but, feeling that excessive diffidence was a weakness, he resolved to overcome it; and he did so gradually by writing out what he was expected to say and delivering it by main force. His eulogy on Cole, in 1848, was spoken with a great deal of trepidation; but at a banquet given to Kossuth by the press, over which he presided (1851), it was observed that he had acquired considerable composure and ease. He was thereafter often called upon to address audiences—by the Horticultural Society in 1856, by the Scotch residents of the city on the hundredth anniversary of Burns's birthday (1859), by the Germans in their demonstration in honor of Schiller the same year—and he acquitted himself, on the several occasions, not only without timidity, but with remarkable self-possession and fluency.* It was because of his ability in this way, and his eminence otherwise, that he was asked to preside at a lecture to be read in New York, by Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, who had been making a national reputation for himself in a series of peripatetic debates with Stephen A. Douglass, of the same State. Thirty years before,

* See "Orations and Addresses," for examples of his speeches. D. Appleton & Co.

Mr. Bryant and Mr. Lincoln had met on the prairie without knowing each other; but Mr. Bryant had heard much of him in the interval from his brothers in Illinois, and they were both pleased to renew the acquaintance. "It was worth the journey to the East," said Mr. Lincoln the next day,* "merely to see such a man," and Mr. Bryant commended the lecture as the decisive word of the contest. From that time he seems to have been disposed to fall in with those who considered Lincoln the best candidate for the high position to which he was nominated and elected the next year.

In this busy and exciting time, Mr. Bryant was too much absorbed in his work to be able to write letters; and the few that he did write, it will be seen, give little hint of the dark clouds that were gathering about the nation.

"NEW YORK, APRIL 15, 1859:† I have this moment got your letter, on my return from the country, and, before I go to work, I answer it on the first piece of paper that comes to hand. You ask what can be done to place a statue to Cooper in New York. Nothing. We had, you may remember, some years since, a great public meeting in the city, at which Webster presided. I delivered a sort of address, and distinguished men made speeches, and contributions were obtained, and a treasurer appointed. Dr. Griswold was the principal getter up of the affair. A few hundred dollars were subscribed, and we thought we should have a monument, but there the matter ended. A few weeks since, Mr. Stevens, the treasurer, with the assent of the principal subscribers and with my concurrence, paid over the money to the persons concerned in getting up the monument at Cooperstown. That seemed to be a live undertaking, while this of New York was dead beyond hope of revival, for the present, at least. Some time hereafter, I have no doubt, the people of this city will think that it is time to do something of the kind; but I think we will wait a few years yet, and in the mean time it seems to me that it is well to have a monument at Cooperstown."

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* Letter of James A. Briggs to the Albany "Evening Journal."

† To R. H. Dana.

"NEW YORK, APRIL 19, 1859:* To-day Mr. Fairchild took my wife, Julia, and myself to see the new park, in which thousands of men are at work blasting rocks, making roads, excavating, rearing embankments, planting trees—a sight that reminded me of Virgil's description of Dido and her people building Carthage. The park is to be enlarged so as to take in all the precipices and intervening hollows as far as the plain of Harlem. The new reservoir is to be a great lake with curved, winding shores, and on the highest point of the grounds an Astronomical Observatory is to be erected.

"Mr. Cobden has been a good deal in the city since you left us. I have seen him twice, and found him very agreeable. On Thursday morning I am to meet him again at Mr. Bancroft's. When asked about Mr. Cobden's conversational powers, Mr. Bancroft said they were 'unequalled, unequalled.' Mr. Cobden dined last week at Mr. Leupp's, and talked much of Peel and other English statesmen. I hear, however, that he complains of being 'dined to death.'"†

"NEW YORK, MAY 6, 1859:‡ I wish you could take a look at our little place in the country this beautiful weather. The sunshine is pure gold, and there are floods of it, poured over a wilderness of blossoms, like cream over strawberries. I have been planting and transplanting, and removing fences, and putting in stone sluiceways for water instead of plank ones; but whether the place looks better for what I have done is more than I can tell. But I have a gardener who was brought up, he boasts, under Loudon and Lindley; and, if what he produces bears any proportion to what he has made me pay for garden-seeds and garden-tools, I shall have flowers enough to overwhelm Mrs. Dewey with bouquets, and all manner of choice vegetables for your dinner, and all manner of garden-fruits for your dessert, if I should be able to draw you two to Roslyn to pass with us

'One long summer day of indolence and mirth.'

"I do not know how it may be with you, but for my part I feel an antipathy to hard work growing upon me. This morning I have been laboriously employed on the 'Evening Post,' and do not like it.

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* To Miss C. M. Gibson.

† Mr. Bryant was introduced to Cobden in England, in 1845, and, coinciding entirely in their political tendencies, they were both glad to renew the acquaintance.

‡ To the Rev. Orville Dewey.

Did you never feel a sense of satiety—a feeling like that of an uncomfortably over-loaded stomach, a rising of the gorge—at the prospect of too much to do? Does the love of ease take possession of us as we approach the period when we must bid the world good-night—just as we are predisposed to rest when the evening comes on?"

"BOSTON, MAY 10, 1859:* I know you must remember the early days when you first came to Cambridge, and met in the old Trowbridge house Allston and my brother Edmund, and Channing and myself, with your friend Phillips. We look back on such a time, not as if there were any continuity between it and the present, but as if it had broken off just there, and we were now in another state, not able to follow up the transition where and when it ended and the present one began. Nothing positive, like intervening death, only void, unmarked space. Poor, limited minds, these of ours, my friend, with all their powers—at least such are they for the present. But, when 'Time shall be no longer,' what a clear expanse they will have!—if used here in sincere, though it be imperfect, obedience to God's will. The first book that I turned to after returning to my room again, and all was past, was yours;† and I read on, letter after letter, for it calmed me like a sunlight, gentle and with no glare. You tell what you had passed through, as if sandy wastes and rough mountains had asked no effort of you, as if borne along with a consenting mind, and not moving through strenuous will. Your pictures are distinct, too, and the style beautifully pure and simple—too pure and simple, I should fear, for the general run of readers.

"ROSLYN, MAY 24, 1859:‡ We all—my wife, Julia, and I—thank you a thousand times for the portrait you have so kindly sent us of your daughter, loved so tenderly and lost so early. It seems to us an admirable likeness, preserving the dignity, the sweetness, and the spirituality of her expression, if not in the fullest degree, yet in as great a measure as we could hope in any such shadow of the beautiful original. It will serve to remind us not only of her, but of the pleasant days we passed together before she was removed from a world of which she was an ornament."

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* From R. H. Dana to Mr. Bryant. † "Letters of a Traveller."
‡ To the Rev. R. C. Waterston.

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 14, 1859:* Probably Mr. Seward stays in Europe till the first flurry occasioned by the Harper's Ferry affair is over; but I do not think his prospects for being the next candidate for the Presidency are brightening. This iteration of the misconstruction put on his phrase of 'the irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery' has, I think, damaged him a good deal, and in this city there is one thing which has damaged him still more. I mean the project of Thurlow Weed to give charters for a set of city railways, for which those who receive them are to furnish a fund of from four to six hundred thousand dollars, to be expended for the Republican cause in the next Presidential election. This scheme was avowed by Mr. Weed to our candidate for mayor, Mr. Opdyke, and others, and shocked the honest old Democrats of our party not a little. Besides the Democrats of our party, there is a bitter enmity to this railway scheme cherished by many of the old Whigs of our party. They are very indignant at Weed's meddling with the affair, and between Weed and Seward they make no distinction, assuming that, if Seward becomes President, Weed will be 'viceroy over him.' Notwithstanding, I suppose it is settled that Seward is to be presented by the New York delegation to the convention as their man.

"Frank Blair, the younger, talks of Wade, of Ohio, and it will not surprise me if the names which have been long before the public are put aside for some one against which fewer objections can be made.

"Our election for mayor is over. We wished earnestly to unite the Republicans on Havemeyer, and should have done so if he had not absolutely refused to stand when a number of Republicans waited on him, to beg that he would consent to stand as a candidate.

"Just as the Republicans had made every arrangement to nominate Opdyke, he concluded to accept the Tammany nomination, and then it was too late to bring the Republicans over. They had become so much offended and disgusted with the misconduct of the Tammany supervisors in appointing registrars, and the abuse showered upon the Republicans by the Tammany speakers, and by the shilly-shallying of Havemeyer, that they were like so many unbroke colts; there was no managing them. So we had to go into a tripartite battle; and Wood, as we told them beforehand, carried off what we were quarrelling for.

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* To John Bigelow, Esq.

Havemeyer has since written a letter to put the Republicans in the right. 'He is too old for the office,' said many persons to me when he was nominated. After I saw that letter I was forced to admit that this was true.

"Your letters are much read. I was particularly, and so were others, interested with the one—a rather long one—on the policy of Napoleon, but I could not subscribe to the censure you passed on England for not consenting to become a party to the Congress unless some assurance was given her that the liberties of Central Italy would be secured. By going into the Congress she would become answerable for its decisions, and bound to sustain them, as she was in the arrangements made by her and the other great powers after the fall of Napoleon—arrangements the infamy of which has stuck to her ever since. I cannot wonder that she is shy of becoming a party to another Congress for the settlement of the affairs of Europe, and I thought that reluctance did her honor. I should have commented on your letter on this subject if it had been written by anybody but yourself. . . .

The Union-savers, who include a pretty large body of commercial men, begin to look on our paper with a less friendly eye than they did a year ago. The southern trade is good just now, and the western rather unprofitable. Appleton says there is not a dollar in anybody's pocket west of Buffalo."

But, if these letters contain few inklings of the tone of the times, Mr. Bryant's poems of the period have not escaped its influences. We have seen that he returned from Europe, in the autumn of 1858, under a feeling of depression caused by the long illness of his wife, and the death of his lovely young friend, Miss Waterston. There was little in the political state of his country to rally his spirits. He did not cease to hope for the best, but the prospects were anything but cheerful. At the same time it happened that, in the course of 1859, he lost many intimate friends by death, among them, Mr. Theodore Sedgwick, for a long time a co-worker in politics; Mr. Benjamin F. Butler, Attorney-General of the United States under Jackson and Van Buren, whose virtues and accomplishments

he greatly admired; Mr. C. M. Leupp, his dear companion of travel; Mr. J. P. Cronkite, a family acquaintance, whose grave is in the English cemetery at Rome, and beside a beloved grandson.

"The sweet smile quenched forever, and stilled the sprightly shout."

In the mood produced by these public and private afflictions he wrote "The Cloud on the Way" and "Waiting by the Gate"; and a little later "The New and the Old" and "The Third of November," so full of sombre thought, yet irradiated by gleams of hope. On a first reading they seem to be too gloomy, but there is nothing of despondency in them; on the contrary, a confident persuasion that "the great movement of the universe, or Change, or Flight of Time," that bears

> "—so silently this visible scene
> Into night's shadow, and the streaming rays
> Of starlight—"

is but the eternal flow of things which,

> "Like a bright river of the field of Heaven,
> Shall journey onward in perpetual peace."

The firmness and serenity of this philosophy are particularly shown in "The Constellations," written in 1860, when the rapid passing away of a number of distinguished persons—Humboldt, Macaulay, De Quincey, Ritter, Arndt, Mrs. Jameson, Leslie, etc., abroad, and of Irving, Prescott, Parker, and others at home—seemed to have left the world in darkness, but whose places, he assures us, will be filled by luminaries no less great.

> "Fair clustered splendors, with whose rays the Night
> Shall close her march in glory, ere she yield
> To the young Day, the great earth steeped in dew."

With Washington Irving Mr. Bryant was never intimately acquainted, although he had seen more or less of him in the casual intercourse of dinner-tables and booksellers' shops; but

when Irving died, in November, 1859, the eyes of the public instinctively turned to him as the proper person to pronounce the words of final eulogy. He was invited to do so by the New York Historical Society, and though not at first inclined to it, because of his many other occupations, he at length consented. An address on the life and character of Irving was delivered on the 3d of April, the anniversay of his birthday. "The task was put upon me," he wrote to a friend, "and I was almost forced to consent. The Academy of Music, an immense theatre, capable of containing three or four thousand persons, was crowded; and the listeners were very attentive to me, as they were to Everett, who followed in a brief speech." It was, in fact, the most successful of his addresses of the kind, partly owing to the universal esteem in which Irving was held, and partly to the tenderness and sweetness with which it set forth the amiable features of his character.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THIRD.

THE ELECTION OF LINCOLN.

A. D. 1860.

In the midst of profounder excitements, Mr. Bryant did not forget his advocacy of the principles of free exchange, and he therefore learned with no little interest of Mr. Cobden's project to establish by treaty a larger commercial intercourse between England and France. He seemeds to have inquired of that eminent and pure-minded statesman—probably through Mr. Bigelow, in Paris—as to the nature of the scheme, to inform both himself and his readers, and received the following answer:

"Paris, January 12, 1860:* I promised that I would let you know if something important occurred in reference to a negotiation which I have in hand here for an extension of the commercial relations between England and France. I write to say that nothing is yet absolutely settled, but the business is getting on favorably, and I have no reason to doubt that it will, in less than a fortnight, be brought to a successful termination; it must, of course, be settled in one way or another before the meeting of Parliament, as the English budget for a year or two must be made in accordance with treaty arrangements. The origin of the negotiation which I have been carrying on in a somewhat informal manner, without credentials, but with the knowledge and concurrence of the Cabinet at home and the ambassador here, is as follows: A considerable item in the annual charge for interest on our debt lapses this year, owing to the termination of a

* From Richard Cobden to W. C. Bryant.

large part of the 'terminable annuities,' which leaves a surplus of a million or two, probably, for our Chancellor of the Exchequer to dispose of. The proposal is, if the French government agrees, that we in England should strike off a large portion of the duties which impede the importation of French commodities, while France would abandon her prohibition system, and gradually admit English manufactures to compete with her own productions. The difficulty is, of course, with the French. Public opinion is still almost unanimously in favor of protection in its most exaggerated form. For the last forty years no government in France has dared to touch the prohibitive system. Even now the Emperor could not pass a moderate measure of commercial reform through his packed *Corps Législatif*. But, by a clause in the constitution, he has power to alter the tariff, *if it be done as part of a treaty with a foreign power*. And it is to this mode of evading the opposition of the protected 'interests' that he intends to resort, if anything be done. It is certain that he is the only man that could alter, in any substantial degree, the present French tariff—and it is the only way in which he can convince the people of Europe that he intends to follow a career of peace and internal improvements. It is the sole mode of placing England and France on a footing of confidence and friendship. Diplomatists and crowned heads do more harm than good by their alliances. The only *entente cordiale* which can be relied on is that which the Almighty has designed in the commercial intercourse of nations.

"The substance of what I have given above you can print as from your own correspondent in your own way. There is no objection to your mentioning my name in connection with the negotiation, but not as your correspondent. You may promise your readers the earliest information of the result. I will write to you as soon as anything is decided, and before anything is known outside of government circles in Europe."

It does not appear that the correspondence went any further, or, if it did, nothing remains of it. The affairs of our own country were now getting to be so intensely earnest, and even perilous, that they demanded every attention. But, before reverting to them, let me interpose a few incidents out of the quieter life:

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 6, 1860:* Your letters respecting the policy of the Emperor were eagerly read and much talked of. Those of M. Sainte-Beuve † caused no comment whatever, except that the subject of Béranger had been exhausted in your own letters, written previously. I read both what related to Béranger and what related to Buffon with much interest, and so did a few others, but I cannot learn that they attracted much attention from the public. For a daily paper they were rather long; but perhaps that was not the main difficulty. The public at large here know very little of the history or personal character of either of those personages, and what is old relating to them has, in the eyes of the mass of readers here, as much novelty as what is just brought to light, but they are not familiar enough with their works to have that craving for anecdotes of their lives, conversation, and correspondence which they have in the case of men distinguished in English literature."

"BOSTON, FEBRUARY 25, 1860:‡ When 'The Cloud on the Way' met my eyes, it seemed to be in reproach for my overlong silence; but how tender, though grave! Was it a forerunner of that death and sorrow which I, only two days ago, heard had entered your house? Sometimes death and troubles do thus cast their shadows before. In your case, it may not have been from any such mysterious communication and influence; for the grave and life beyond the grave have been too often the subjects of verse with you for that. I heard that it was the youngest but one of your grandchildren that had been taken away, but I did not learn its age. If you and your wife and daughter feel as I do when the very young die, I should hope this child had been of the very young; for they seem not to have lived long enough here to have had the spirit of heaven in them dulled with earth-stains. They seem to have been let come here for merely time enough to pass through unharmed to the better world. We do not make an intermediate state of continued life real enough to ourselves. It is a dreary thought, and next to annihilation, to imagine to ourselves ages and ages of unconscious sleep between death and the resurrection.

* To John Bigelow, Esq.

† Author of "Causeries de Lundi," who had been engaged as Paris correspondent of the "Evening Post."

‡ From R. H. Dana to W. C. Bryant.

And the word of God, I humbly think, does not teach it, nor does the Church, nor, my dear sir, does our own spirit, tell us it is so when we stand by the body, or the newly covered grave, of those we love. Life comes up from the ground, and life rays down upon us from the stars, and the blessed sunshine has life in it for us then. How this softens grief and makes death itself a kindly good!"

"WASHINGTON, APRIL 5, 1860:* Excuse me for paying the tribute of admiration and gratitude which I owe you for that most wonderful eulogium.† It is, of and by itself, a monument of American literature."

"NEW YORK, APRIL 13, 1860:‡ I wrote my last letter in such haste, that I omitted to do what was in my mind when I began it; that is to say, to desire you to return my best thanks to M. le Chevalier de Chatelain for the honor he has done my verses. To be translated into French by the translator of Chaucer is an honor indeed. Please to thank him in my name for the new graces he has given to 'The Burial of Love,' and to several others of my poems. Among these, the version of 'The Strange Lady' seems to me executed with particular skill.§ . . . The Irving meeting was a grand affair, so far, at least, as the concourse that attended was concerned—an immense audience, and very attentive. Professor Green's speech, the latter part at least, was not heard; the audience was impatient for Everett, who delivered his remarks with more vehemence of manner than usual."

"NEW YORK, APRIL 30, 1860:‖ If we will have you? Doctor,

'what words have passed thy lips unweighed!'

"If the earth will have the spring—if the sunflower will have sunshine—if the flock will have grass. You might as well put an *if* between a hungry man and his dinner. You shall come to Roslyn, you

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* From Senator William H. Seward to W. Cullen Bryant, Esq.

† On Washington Irving.

‡ To John Bigelow, Esq.

§ These translations were afterward gathered into a volume.

‖ To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

and your Sultana, and shall be welcome, and treated *en rois*. If I were writing for the press I should not say *en rois*, for in public I hold it my duty to maintain on all occasions the supremacy and sufficiency of the English language: but I have said *en rois* because it came into my head. Come on, and we will make the most of you both, and anybody else you choose to bring with you—that our poor means allow. You shall not be walked out more than you absolutely choose, nor asked to look at anything. You shall have full leave to bury yourself in books, or write, or think, or smoke away your time, and I will make a provision of segars for your idle hours, with the prudent toleration which the innocent have for the necessary vices of others. I have a coachman, and he shall take you about the country whenever you and Mrs. Dewey take a fancy for a ride. And having done this, I will neglect you, for I am afraid that is what you like, to your heart's content. And then, if—for I, too, must have my if—if you will only stay over Sunday, you shall be asked to preach by our orthodox Presbyterian minister, who inquires when Dr. Dewey is expected, for he wants to ask him to preach. Come, then, prepared for a ten days' sojourn, with a stock of patience in your heart, and a sermon or two in your pocket, of your second or third quality, for we are quite plain people here, and anything very fine is wasted upon us.

"For any imperfections in my eulogy on Irving I beg you to consider the Historical Society as responsible; they put it upon me without consulting me; and at first I flatly refused, but I was afterward talked into consent. Besides the excuses of incapacity, unworthiness, and all that, I did not want the labor of writing the discourse. There has been no end of work with me the past winter. . . . Among other symptoms of age, I find a disposition growing up within me to regard the world as belonging to a new race of men, who have somehow or other got into it, and taken possession of it, and among whom I am a superfluity.* What have I to do with their quarrels and controversies? I, who am already proposed as a member of the same club with Daniel Defoe and Sir Roger L'Estrange. Is it fitting that, just as I have taken my hat to go out and join the Ptolemies, I should be plucked by the elbow and asked to read a copy of silly verses, and say whether they are fit to be printed? Besides, it seems to be agreed

* See "The Old and New," Poetical Works, vol. ii.

by everybody who is about my own age, or older, that the world is nowadays much wickeder than when they were young; and it is no more than it deserves to leave it to take care of itself as it can. But we will talk over these things when you come."

"BOSTON, MAY 19, 1860:* It is a good while since I received from you a copy of your address on the late Washington Irving's birthday. It was natural that you should begin it as you did, for all who gathered to listen to you must have had their thoughts turned toward his death rather than his birth, and as you went on to the close with the same naturalness, simplicity, and beauty of expression, tender thoughtfulness with all due praise, yet nothing in excess, and giving to the whole that completeness which shows a man to have full possession of his subject—which is characteristic of you."

It may here be noted that an effect of the death of Irving had been to produce a vacancy in the honorable membership of the Massachusetts Historical Society, which was immediately filled by the election of Mr. Bryant to the place. Mr. R. C. Winthrop, the President, in communicating the fact to him afterward, took occasion to write as follows:

"BOSTON, FEBRUARY 27, 1861:† Our friend Mr. Waterston has been the medium of adding to my literary treasures a most cherished souvenir at once of the dead and of the living. I mean, of course, the tribute to Irving, which reached me last evening with the autograph of its accomplished author, and with the date of that incomparable birthday. I was absent from the country when Irving died. A message which I had sent him from his old friend, Prince Esterhazy, was a few days too late. Had he lived another month or two, I had reason for thinking that the Institute of France would not have lost the honor (too long deferred) of having his name on its rolls. It was no loss to him; yet such evidences of European appreciation are not to be underrated. A tribute like yours, however, is worth a thousand foreign diplomas, and I thank you sincerely for the copy which you have so kindly sent me.

"It gave me peculiar pleasure to unite in giving the unanimous

* From R. H. Dana. † From Robert C. Winthrop, of Boston.

vote by which you have succeeded to the place of Irving on the roll of our old Historical Society. The election took place on the 14th inst., and our corresponding secretary has doubtless informed you of it. '*Non deficit aurens alter.*' If old Jeremy Belknap could look down upon the succession of worthies who have occupied our chairs, he would feel that his labors have not been in vain. He would have a special welcome, I am sure, for one who has paid so many just tributes to his memory as you have done, and would only feel, as we all do, that the acknowledgment had been too long postponed."

"NEW YORK, JUNE 14, 1860:* I hardly thought you would speak so well of my eulogy on Irving as you have done. On such occasions we are apt to over-praise, and I was not sure that I had avoided that fault. The eulogy was well received; but Irving was a universal favorite, and what I said was commended to men's kindness by the subject. But, when you praise, I know you mean it.

"With regard to giving letters to persons in England, I have always been embarrassed when asked to do it. The English are sometimes capricious in the matter of introductions, and I am afraid of them. My literary acquaintances there are few. I have sought no man's acquaintance among them. I shall, however, rummage in my memory, and see what I can do for your friend, Mr. Dix. I have not written to you since the death of my little grandson. He was about three years old; quite a favorite in the family, waggish, playful, and of quick sensibilities. His loss was a great grief to all of us. I see that you, too, have had your losses by death. At our time of life we find the world becoming empty of those we love and filling up with strangers.

"My partner, Mr. Bigelow, who has been absent in Europe for a year and a half, has just returned, and I expect to have more leisure hereafter, though, perhaps, for the last eight or nine months I have had as much as I ought to have. I sometimes think of visiting Boston again, but somehow I have a dread of Boston. To go to any country place is an entertainment to me; to go to a large town I find myself, for what reason I can scarcely say, reluctant. I shall not find Boston what it was when I knew it, and the change, I am sure, will not strike

* To R. H. Dana.

me pleasantly. In one respect it will affect me with a sadness. Most of my old friends there and in its neighborhood are gone."

"WASHINGTON, JUNE 6, 1860:* You may regard it as quite superfluous for me to speak in commendation of the 'Evening Post'; but inasmuch as at one period I had occasion to think and to assert that its language was over-hard toward me, I desire to say, for my own satisfaction, not yours, with how great instruction and pleasure at present I read it every day, and with what daily increasing estimation of its superior dignity, fairness, wisdom, and truth. If you ask why I write this now, or why, if it be deserved to be written, it was not written before now, I can only say that a long-existing, half-formed purpose has at last been quickened into action by the admirable article (as I deem it) in yesterday's 'Post' on the subject of Poland."

"NEW YORK, JUNE 19, 1860:† Our Presbyterian pastor, if pastor he may be called, who never holds a sheep-shearing, nor ever accepts the small clippings of a donation party, and yet who objects not to receive any handsome lock of wool that comes off on the brambles, is ready to resign his crook to you for one Sunday, and trust you to lead his flock to 'fresh fields and pastures new,' and guide them to untasted springs; I hope they will 'bless their stars and think it luxury.'

"The sky over our heads is not brass, quite, nor the earth under our feet ashes, but Roslyn suffers for want of rain. If the showers do not fall soon, the country will lose much of its beauty. The rains which are withheld from the region east of the Rocky Mountains have been poured down on the Pacific coast in California, where the rainy season has lingered for weeks beyond its usual period."

"ROSLYN, JULY 9, 1860:‡ I have your note appointing next week for your visit to Roslyn. No time could suit us better. After a long drought, the earth has been saturated with rain. The burning of gunpowder, such is Espy's theory, on the fourth, brought down the showers, and the earth can hardly lose the impressment of freshness it has received before you come. We should have been glad to have you in the season of cherries and roses, which are just going out, the roses

* From Caleb Cushing. † To the Rev. Dr. Dewey. ‡ To the same.

especially; but you shall be welcome to the raspberries and verbenas, with, I hope, a carnation or two. The church has been got ready for you—renovated, as the Italians say; the ceiling, as a country newspaper described it the other day, 'painted in water-colors'—that is to say, endued with a fresh coat of whitewash—the walls neatly papered, the pulpit and pews painted, and floor neatly carpeted, and the cigars are bought and ready for your smoking. I am told they smell of tropical sunshine and the Vuelta Abajo, but I know not, though I have been in San Antonio; you shall judge. Have no apprehensions concerning the second sermon; the custom of the place tolerates but one on a Sunday. If you do not like the word superfine applied to your sermons, exchange it for philosophical. Here in Roslyn we cannot all of us read, and yet we wear beards as long as anybody.

"I wish merely to caution you against being misled by those external symbols of wisdom. What we require is milk for babes—the simplest rudiments of that *divinum rerum notilia* of which you speak. And then our congregation is small, so that a great discourse will not be necessary. Our pastor will not run away, you may be assured, but will sit beside you, both for his and our edification, and to give his flock the assurance that what you shall set before them is good and wholesome."

"New York, August 16, 1860:* Your summer must have been very agreeable if the season there has been like ours—temperate days, cool nights, almost perpetual sunshine, yet mild as the sunshine of early June. I desire nothing pleasanter in the way of weather than this summer has been on Long Island. Then the fruits have been so fine—plenty of strawberries, cherries of the finest, lingering into the latter half of July, till we became impatient to have them gone. Now the plums are coming in abundantly, almost for the first time, and basketfuls of juicy pears.

"I was in town lately for two or three days, leaving Mr. William B. Ogden at Roslyn. When I returned, I found he had taken off Fanny and her husband, Julia and Bryant, to Mauch Chunk and Bethlehem. They were particularly delighted with Bethlehem and the Moravians, as you would be, for they are the most musical of all the little com-

* To Miss C. M. Gibson, of Edinburgh.

munities in the United States, and their litanies, which are addressed to the Supreme Being in choral harmonies peculiar to themselves, are very impressive. Fanny came back much improved in health. The Great Eastern has come and gone, but neither my wife nor I have seen it, so we shall have no cause to boast over you. I would not go where there was such a crowd, and the Great Eastern remains what my imagination pleases to make it. Those who have seen it have not that advantage. To them it is a circumscribed idea. Knowledge—particularly knowledge of the works of the human hand—is the great destroyer of the sublime."

"NEW YORK, OCTOBER 3, 1860, SIX O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING:* We had the pleasantest journey from Boston to New York that could be imagined. A beautiful Indian summer's day, with floating clouds and a golden sunshine streaming between them through a soft autumnal haze; no dust, nor any other inconvenience. We reached New York in safety, Mrs. Bryant not much tired, at half past five, full of delightful recollections of our visit to Boston, and of your hospitality and extreme kindness." †

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* To Mr. and Mrs. Waterston.

† Of this visit Mrs. Waterston writes: "In the autumn of 1860, just after the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President, and also when the news came of Garibaldi and King Victor Emmanuel's entrance into Naples, Mr. and Mrs. Bryant and their daughter were staying with us in Boston. It was a memorable season for us, and, in these great events, for the world. Mr. Waterston invited a large number of gentlemen to meet Mr. Bryant at our house one evening. We ladies were also present. No one who was there can forget Mr. Bryant, as he stood among many remarkable men. I had placed the Italian colors round Garibaldi's picture, and written under it Mrs. Browning's lines:

"'Red for the patriot blood,
Green for the martyr's crown,
And white for the dew and the rime,
When the morning of God comes down.'

"Mr. Bryant smiled his rare smile as he read the lines, and said: 'It is a great day for Italy.' To us, who had such tender and sacred associations with Naples, it seemed a great blessing to be together at such a time.

"During this visit, we drove out to Quincy and visited my father, Josiah Quincy, then in his ninetieth year, in the old family mansion. The day was one of surpassing interest to all of us."

"NEW YORK, OCTOBER 9, 1860: * I do not see how I can comply with the request you make. The Pierian spring on my grounds runs low; it is like the Fountain of the Virgin when I saw it at Bethlehem —only a drop oozing from the ground at a time. 'Spare my age,' as Pope says somewhere."

"MOUNT SAVAGE, MARYLAND, OCTOBER 15, 1860: † We got your letter in New York just as we were setting off on a visit to an old friend of mine, a New Yorker (John A. Graham), who has been here for thirteen years—a mountain region a hundred and eighty miles west of Baltimore, among the Alleghanies, the woods of which are glorious with the hues of autumn. Here we are in the midst of forests of grand old trees, and broad slopes, and deep valleys, with shallow brawling streams at the bottom, and mountain summits overlooking mountain summits. We are in the Cumberland coal region, with mining villages around us, and railway trains snorting and whistling as they bear their burdens from the mines to the market. To-day we have been on a visit to one of these coal mines—Mrs. Godwin, Julia, and myself, and one of our kind hosts; my wife, I am sorry to say, had taken cold in coming here, and could not go. The mines are long, bleak passages in the earth, leading to low chambers propped up by posts, where workmen ply their sledges to break away the coal from the sides and the roof. Out of some of these passages run brooks yellow with alum and copperas—Stygian streams; and the begrimed workmen, black as Ethiops, each bearing a little crooked lamp in his cap, look like horned demons of the mine. At the end of the passage blazed and roared a fierce fire of coal, with bare-armed workmen before it, stirring and feeding the flames so the visitor might almost fancy he had got to a place where he was to be roasted alive. But these fires are only for ventilation; the furnaces reach to the upper air, and the roaring flames draw after them a strong gale from the entrance to the mine.

"At the mines a flag was flying. It was a Lincoln flag, and the proprietor told me that seventy-five votes would be given for Lincoln in his village."

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* To James T. Fields, Esq. † To Mrs. Waterston.

The Lincoln flag was, in fact, flying everywhere at the North. After a strenuous contest within the Republican party, the plain but honest and able "rail-splitter of Illinois," as he came to be called, was chosen as its candidate for the Presidency. It had been generally expected that Senator Seward, of New York, would be nominated to the position; but there was strong opposition to him, particularly in his own State, consisting of the old Democratic Free-Soilers, who turned the scale against him. Mr. Bryant was one of these; although personally on friendly terms with Mr. Seward, he strongly disliked Mr. Seward's associations and methods in politics, and he consequently gave all the weight of his counsel and his name to the side of Mr. Lincoln. The brief interview of a year before had awakened so much reciprocal confidence that Mr. Bryant was active, even to enthusiasm, in behalf of his Western friend. But he knew the perils to which that friend was thereby exposed, and, when he was nominated at Chicago, wrote to him in this way:

"NEW YORK, JUNE 16, 1860:* I was about to say that I congratulate you on your nomination; but when I consider the vexations which your position as a candidate will bring with it, and the cares and responsibilities which your success will throw upon you, I do not congratulate you. It is the country which is to be congratulated. I was not without apprehensions that the nomination might fall upon some person encumbered with bad associates, and it was with a sense of relief and infinite satisfaction that I, with thousands of others, heard the news of your nomination. It is fortunate that you have never gathered about you a knot of political confederates. You will excuse the frankness of an old campaigner, who has been engaged in political controversies for more than a third of a century, if I say that I hope you will allow none to be formed around you while you stand before the country as a candidate. I have observed that the candidates who are most cautious of committing themselves to any course of policy, giving their adherence to any opinion, entering into any

* W. C. Bryant to Abraham Lincoln.

engagement whatever for the future in case of their election, save themselves and their friends a great deal of trouble, and have the best chance of success. The people have nominated you without any pledges or engagements on your part; they are satisfied with you as you are, and they want you to do nothing but allow yourself to be elected. I am sure that I speak the sentiments of the greater number of your friends when I say that they want you to make no speeches, write no letters as a candidate, enter into no pledges, make no promises, nor even give any of those kind words which men are so apt to interpret into promises. This latter indiscretion has been the source of much trouble with Presidents. Polk, Pierce, and Buchanan had infinite trouble from that cause. Fremont, if he had been elected, would have had quite as much.

"I hope what I have said is no impertinence. I feel the strongest interest in your success. What you do does not concern you alone, but it greatly concerns the people of the United States."

Mr. Lincoln's answer was, of course, very brief, and as follows:

"SPRINGFIELD, ILL., JUNE 28, 1860:* Please accept my thanks for the honor done me by your kind letter of the 16th. I appreciate the danger against which you would guard me; nor am I wanting in the *purpose* to avoid it. I thank you for the additional strength your words give me to maintain that purpose.

"Your friend and servant,

"A. LINCOLN."

Never was there a more determined and bitter political struggle than that in which Lincoln was elected. No fewer than four well-organized and powerful factions occupied the field: the Democrats, broken into two camps, one supported by and supporting the pro-slavery South, with Breckinridge at its head; another, following Stephen A. Douglass, who adhered to the doctrine of "squatter sovereignty," which left the question of slavery to local territorial decision, the more

* From Abraham Lincoln to William C. Bryant.

conservative and timid classes—traders, and of the middle region—who, under the lead of Bell, of Tennessee, and Everett, of Massachusetts, still supposed that the final clash might be averted by compromises; and the Republicans, who disclaimed any purpose to assail slavery as it already existed, but were inveterately opposed to the extension of its influence in every respect. These antagonisms, however, had ceased to be those of rational debate, and had become those of fierce and furious passion. The South, feeling that its political power was about to be lost forever, put no restraints upon its resentment and anger. It no longer argued; it railed, it denounced, and it menaced. Many persons at the North were frightened by its threats of disunion; many regarded them as the bluster of disappointment and impotent rage; while the clear-seeing few were convinced that, whether those threats were in earnest or for a purpose, the time had come to set them at defiance.

When it was known that Mr. Lincoln had been elected, Mr. Bryant spoke of the result in this way:

"What the more sagacious calculators of chances in the different political parties were prepared for has now become a fact; the Republican party has triumphed, and Abraham Lincoln, if he lives to the 4th of March next, will be President of the United States. An immense majority in the free States are now rejoicing at the result; a large minority of citizens of Southern States, hitherto trampled under the iron heel of an oligarchy which has shown itself as impatient of the freedom of thought as any of the despotisms of the Old World, are rejoicing with still more intense delight. Even in the slave States the elections have taken a turn which shows how strongly a large proportion of their people sympathize with their brethren of the North. Virginia, the most powerful of them all, has emphatically rebuked the disunionists and their treasonable schemes by giving her voice for Bell and Everett. In Kentucky, one of the most flourishing of the offshoots from Virginia, the disunionists are beaten by a large majority; Breckinridge, one of her sons, who should have had her vote, if he had not held opinions and cherished views offensive to her people, is set aside, and electors who are to vote for Bell are chosen by a large

majority. In Maryland, the struggle between Bell and Breckinridge is close, but the State would have gone for Bell by a considerable majority had not the friends of Lincoln nominated and supported a ticket of their own. Wilmington, one of the most busy, enterprising, and prosperous towns in any slave State, gives a majority of two hundred for the Lincoln ticket. Missouri turns her back on Breckinridge, and gives her vote to Douglas. It is impossible to regard these results of the election in that great belt of slave States which immediately adjoin the free States, otherwise than as the strongest expression they could give of their inflexible determination to abide by our Federal Union.

"There are various causes of congratulation in this survey of our successes. It is most gratifying to see what we believe to be a righteous cause—the cause of justice and humanity—after a long and weary struggle, closed by a decisive triumph. It is consoling to those who cherish high hopes of the destinies of our race, to see a great people, after a long discussion in which the subtlest skill has been employed to varnish over wrong and give it a semblance of fairness, and, after allowing itself for a time to be misled by these sophistries, at length breaking through them all, and deciding boldly and firmly for the right.

"We congratulate the country, moreover, on having escaped the confusion, the agitations, and the corruption which must necessarily attend the choice of a President by the House of Representatives. These dangers have of late been so strongly pressed upon the public attention that we need not dwell upon them here. This consideration had, no doubt, its effect in enabling us to foil the scheme of those who hoped, by a combination of all factions opposed to the Republican party in the free States, to carry the choice of a President into Congress, and to convulse the Union with another series of manœuvres and intrigues such as were put in motion last winter to prevent the election of a Republican Speaker.

"We congratulate the country, also, on the termination of the almost frantic struggle of the slave-holders for the introduction of their baleful institution into the territories. How violent that struggle has been, how reckless those who were engaged in it have been of the plainest rules of justice, and how indifferent to the peace of the country, we need not stop to describe. The contest is now necessarily at

an end; it can go no further. The controversy is closed. There can be no hope of influencing the Executive to favor their designs; the expectation of reopening the slave-trade to people these territories with African bondmen is at an end, never, probably, to be revived.

"We might enlarge this list of reasons for congratulation to an indefinite extent; but we rather pass on to remark that our rejoicing at the success we have obtained should be sobered by the reflection that we have taken upon ourselves immense responsibilities which we must consider how we shall faithfully discharge. For two years to come we must expect to find a majority in both Houses of Congress influenced by a spirit of distrust, if not of hostility, to the Republican administration. We must have patience to wait till, by a wise and impartial course of conduct, by a strict regard to the rights of the States, by a careful abstinence from every doubtful exercise of authority, by a frugal administration of the finances, and by the selection of wise, able, and upright men as the agents of the Government in every post, distrust shall be changed to confidence and hostility disarmed of its weapons. We have pronounced in favor of a most conscientious as well as most able man to fill the Executive chair. The administra- of the Federal Government must be conformed in all respects to the character of our Chief Magistrate, or the hold which we have obtained upon the people is lost. Our success in the election, by deciding one question—the extension of slavery to the territories—has deprived our party of one important bond of union, one of the most powerful causes which have attracted to it the interest and favor of the people. Its place can only be supplied by an earnest endeavor to distinguish the Republican administration by an enlightened zeal for the public welfare.

"In closing our remarks, we take this occasion to congratulate the old friends of the 'Evening Post,' who have read it for the last score of years or thereabouts, on this new triumph of the principles which it maintains. The Wilmot Proviso is now consecrated as a part of the national public policy by this election; but earlier than the Wilmot Proviso was the opposition of our journal to the enlargement of slavery. It began with the first whisper of the scheme to annex Texas to the American Union, and it has been steadily maintained from that moment till now, when the right and justice of our cause is pro-

claimed in a general election by the mighty voice of a larger part of thirty millions of people.*

These were cheerful views of the result—more cheerful altogether than the facts warranted—and the practical comment upon them was the repeal by the South Carolina Legislature,† amid salvos of artillery, of the solemn ratification of the Union, which the fathers of the republic had formed seventy years before (1788). Although, as one of the ablest of the southern statesmen, Alexander H. Stephens, averred, in a speech to his misguided fellow-citizens, that Union was only known to them by its good fruits, only touched them to bring a blessing, passion was stronger than reason, and the torch of the incendiary was madly applied to the noble edifice.

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* "Evening Post," November 7, 1860. Mr. Lincoln did not, as it is here said, get a majority of the popular vote—only a plurality.

† December 20, 1860.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOURTH.

THE OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR.

A. D. 1861.

THE bad example set by South Carolina, of revolting against an election in which she participated, because she disliked the result, was followed in the first months of 1861 by the six extreme Southern or Gulf States — Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida, Texas, and Alabama; and these expected to seduce or drag over the remaining slave States — those of the middle belt—into a speedy complicity with their own disorder. Some persons believed, or affected to believe, that these manifestations were mere bravado, intended as moves in the game of politics, which, when they should have produced their effect, would be abandoned. Even senators gave out, in public speeches, that it was but a temporary gale, destined to blow itself out in sixty days. More discerning men saw in them signs of a more destructive tempest than had ever before assailed a civilized nation. Nearly half the States of the Union were preparing to take up arms in defence of a theory of State Rights, which they had learned from their cradles, and of a practice of holding slaves, on which, as they thought, not only their material prosperity, but their political domination and domestic security depended. Of course, they were going to fight to the death.

What confirmed them in this resolution to fight was the complete chaos of opinion that prevailed in the non-revolting

States as to the proper mode of meeting the difficulty. The Federal administration, which had been largely controlled by Southern influences, was still in sympathy with them, and, to a large extent, stupefied and paralyzed by its own incompetency. It pretended to condemn the doctrine of secession, but knew of no method of suppressing secession when it was put in practice. Its authority under the Constitution was regarded as limited to a barren assertion of abstract formulas without a particle of power to maintain its existence, and still less to enforce its universal supremacy. A State, it said, could not be coerced, and how a league of States? On the other hand, the incoming administration was yet unformed; its chief was a comparatively untried man; its policy could only be guessed at; while the masses of the people had not declared their wishes in a definite or decisive way. Prominent Democratic leaders did not disguise their approval of the Southern movement, and some of them held that it would be well to imitate it in the North. Prominent Republican leaders were willing "to let the wayward sisters go in peace." In Congress the debates were impassioned appeals to the prejudices of one side or the other rather than cool or wise deliberations. A Peace Conference, assembled at Washington, professedly in the interests of moderation and order, issued only in projects of impracticable compromise, which fell dead as soon as they were born. Darker days than those—more full of suspense, anxiety, dread—the republic had never known. Everybody felt the forerunning shudders of an earthquake, but nobody knew how soon it would come, nor the extent of its ravages when its remorseless jaws should once open.

During this period of doubt and agitation Mr. Bryant was singularly calm, and he was so because he had made up his mind firmly as to what was to be done. In his opinion there was no other course for the general Government but to assert its authority at once—temperately but vigorously—and without ultimate thought of concession or treaty. As the execu-

tion of this policy would depend largely upon the character of the new President's Cabinet, he was very solicitous on that head, and wrote to Mr. Lincoln in regard to it on several occasions. Early in November already — a few days after the election—he gave his advice to the President-elect, in these words:

"NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 10, 1860: * You will not, I hope, find what I have to say in this letter intrusive or unreasonable. If you should, you will, of course, treat it as it deserves to be treated. I have no doubt that you receive frequent suggestions from various quarters respecting the selection of your Cabinet when you take the Executive chair. It is natural that your fellow-citizens who elected you to office should feel a strong interest in regard to the choice of those men who are to act as your advisers and your special assistants in the administration of affairs. The confidence of the people in the wisdom and the virtue of the Government depends in a good degree on that choice. You will therefore, I trust, most readily pardon a little zeal in this matter, even if it should go somewhat beyond the limits of a well-bred courtesy.

"You have numerous friends in this quarter, and they are among the most enlightened and disinterested of the Republican party, who would be greatly pleased if your choice of a Secretary of State should fall on Mr. Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio. He is regarded as one of the noblest and truest of the great leaders of that party, as a man in all respects beyond reproach—which you know few men are. He is able, wise, practical, pure—no associate of bad men, nor likely to counsel their employment in any capacity. A Cabinet with such a man in its principal department, associated with others worthy to be his colleagues, would immediately command the public confidence. Of course, I do not expect you to make any reply to this letter. You will receive it as an expression of my sincere desire for the success of your administration."

He recurred to the subject in January following:

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 21, 1861: † At some risk of being deemed troublesome, yet with the greatest respect and deference, I take the

* To A. Lincoln, President-elect.

† To the same.

liberty of addressing you once more on the subject of the Cabinet appointments. I believe you do not differ with me in regard to the importance of giving Mr. Chase a place in the Cabinet, as one whose wisdom, rigid integrity, and force of character would make him a most safe counsellor and efficient co-operator, not to speak of the need of his presence there as a counterpoise to the one who joins to commanding talents a flexible and indulgent temper of mind and unsafe associations.

"The appointment of Mr. Chase would give a feeling of security and confidence to the public mind which the rascalities of Mr. Buchanan's Cabinet have made exceedingly sensitive and jealous, and would, it seems to me, settle the point in advance that the new administration will be both honored and beloved. The Government will be compelled, for the next four years, to depend somewhat for resources upon its credit, and how important it is to have an honest and economical man at the head of the Treasury Department is shown by an example now before our eyes. The appointment of General Dix as Secretary of the Treasury, who, with all his mistakes, is a man of incorruptible honesty, had already greatly raised the credit of the Government, brought so low by the misconduct of Cobb.

"Setting out with this position, I proceed to remark that, from what I learn through Mr. Opdyke, who has just seen Mr. Chase, it is not certain that Mr. Chase would take a place in the Cabinet unless it were offered to him early. He is not inclined to do it at all, preferring a seat in the Senate; and there are, I am told, some personal reasons, and others, connected with the choice of his successor in the Senate, that will, if the offer were delayed, induce him to remain where he is. I am not a judge of the force of these reasons, but am only certain that they exist. The only occasion for delaying is the hope of satisfying Mr. Cameron and his friends. It is thought by some who know him to be very tenacious of his purposes, that there is no probability of doing this effectually, whether the appointment of Mr. Chase be delayed or not. If, however, it be possible to satisfy him, it is to be considered whether it will not be as easy to do it after the offer be made to Mr. Chase as now, and whether the hope of obtaining better terms for him will not induce Mr. Cameron to affect to spurn any reconciliation as long as the appointment which he expects is kept open. One thing, however, is perfectly clear—that, by losing the chance of

securing the services of Mr. Chase in the Treasury department, both the country and the Republican party will lose infinitely more than the administration could possibly suffer from the enmity of Mr. Cameron and his adherents.

"I leave this subject here, that I may say a single word upon another. I learn from Mr. Opdyke that, in a letter written to you some time since on the subject of 'protection,' I did not make myself fully understood. I thought I had clearly expressed my meaning when I said that those who thought with me were 'willing that this should be an open question.' I wished merely to express a hope that the administration would not throw its entire influence on the side of protection. The Republican party, not being agreed among themselves in regard to this matter, the [illegible] policy, it seems to me, should be extremely moderate, and not calculated to disaffect either side." *

Again, a month later, he renews the topic:

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 5th, 1861: † I wrote to you yesterday ‡ in regard to the rumored intention of giving Mr. Simon Cameron, of Pennsylvania, a place in the Cabinet. I had not then spoken much with others of our party, but I have since heard the matter discussed, and the general feeling is one of consternation. Mr. Cameron has the reputation of being concerned in some of the worst intrigues of the Democratic party. His name suggests to every honest Republican in the State no other associations than these. At present, those who favor his appointment in this State are the men who last winter so shamefully corrupted our Legislature. If he is to have a place in the Cabinet at all, the Treasury department is the last of our public interests that ought to be committed to his hands.

"In the last election, the Republican party did not strive simply for the control, but one of the great objects was to secure a pure and virtuous administration of the Government. In the first respect we have succeeded; but, if such men as Cameron are to form the Cabinet, we shall not have succeeded in the second. There are able men who would fill the place of Secretary of the Treasury whose integrity is

* These letters are taken from a first and imperfect draft.

† To Abraham Lincoln, President-elect.

‡ This letter has not been found.

tried and acknowledged. I believe Mr. Gideon Welles, of Hartford, has been spoken of. There is no more truly upright man, and few men in public life are so intelligent. If we look to New York, we have Mr. Opdyke, the late Republican candidate for Mayor of this city, a man also who has made finance a long study, and whom no temptation could cause to swerve in the least respect from the path of right. [Illegible.] . . .

The tenor of Mr. Lincoln's speeches, on his way from Illinois to the East, gave great encouragement to his friends. They were moderate in tone, but firm in their expositions of the line of duty. When he arrived in New York, Mr. Bryant had an interview with him at the Astor House, from which he derived the most satisfactory assurances. He felt from that moment that Lincoln would conduct himself cautiously, but wisely and well. The inaugural address yielded him still greater satisfaction, in which the whole country participated. But the prospect was yet exceedingly dark. The process of disintegration was going on with rapid strides. It was probable that if the President resorted to coercion in regard to the Gulf States, the great Middle States—Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas — would endeavor to join in the revolt; and how would the North answer the appeal to arms?

Fortunately, the arrogance and precipitancy of the Southern leaders prepared the way for a proper answer to it. Their lofty airs of defiance, their boasts of superior courage, their contemptuous taunts of the supposed money-loving and consequent cowardice of the North, their summary methods of dealing with the reluctant border States, conspired to arouse a feeling of resentment and reaction; and, when they proceeded to seize the forts, arsenals, and navy yards, the common property of the nation, and to convert them to the uses of rebellion, it could no longer be doubted what the sentiments of the Northern people were. But it remained for the assault upon Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, over which the flag

of the Union still waved, to provoke the final outbreak of patriotism (April 12th–13th). It was, as the Count de Gasparin called it, "the uprising of a nation," which, for enthusiasm and determination, has had few parallels (April 14th). Mr. Lincoln's call for seventy-five thousand troops (April 19th) fell upon eager ears; and the prompt responses to it by the governors of the free States, and by the people universally, without distinction of party, foretold the end from the beginning, whatever might be the intervening cost.

At the outset of the conflict of arms, the insurgents, who had long been preparing themselves to act upon the aggressive, had altogether the best of it. The new administration was inexperienced, unready, undecided; and a series of disasters, culminating in the rout of Bull Run, filled the rebels with hope, the patriots with dismay, and the enemies of the republic on the other side of the water, who preferred rebellion and slavery to constitutional government and freedom, with rejoicing. Many timid souls began again to talk of accommodation. What Mr. Bryant thought of such counsels we may learn from one of his many utterances of the time:

"The community is thrown into astonishment by a rumor of offers to compromise the quarrel between the Government and the rebels—between the violators of the law and those who obey it—between those who seek to overthrow the Constitution by violence and those who uphold it. We wonder not at the astonishment; we only wonder at those who in the present state of things can talk of compromise.

"The question of compromise has been fully debated and settled. Both the North and the South, before the breaking out of hostilities, have rejected the idea of accommodating the quarrel by compromise. What we would not yield in a peaceable conference, shall we yield to those who have assembled a numerous army, threatening the seat of Government and overhanging the frontier of the free States? Grant anything that looks like a compromise, agree to anything which has the slightest resemblance to a concession, and you only minister to the arrogance of the rebels. 'See,' they will exclaim, 'what we have extorted from the cowardly North! We have forced from their fears

and their interests what we could not obtain from their love of justice. The resort to arms is the only way of dealing with the free States. When they hold the power, we have only to rebel, and they come to our terms.'

"In the present state of things, therefore, compromise is only an encouragement to rebellion. Those who ask us to make concessions ask that treason may be permitted to dictate to the lawful authorities of the land. We cannot yield anything to the rebels without bringing the Government into discredit for its weakness, both at home and abroad. We shall give the different States of the Union to understand that if any of them is dissatisfied with the Government, the proper remedy is a resort to arms. Still worse will be the consequence in our dealings with other countries. If traitors within our own limits can obtain what they desire by taking up arms, foreign governments will presume on our want of spirit and make war upon us whenever they have a demand to make which we are not prepared to concede.

"The one thought of the vast majority of the people of the Union now is to enforce the laws. All classes, persons of all ages, the gentler as well as the rougher sex, are inspired with a feeling of loyalty to the Union which partakes of the sublimity of religion. All hasten to lend their aid; all pour out their means; parents send their children to the war; the young men freely offer their lives; the aged and the women their prayers, and zealously occupy themselves in providing for the comfort and health of our armies. The Government is surrounded by a greater number of willing defenders than it can find arms for. Never did men flock with such enthusiasm to a war since the time of the Crusades.

"And now that we have hemmed in the rebels by sea and land; now that we have cut off their supplies of arms, ammunitions, and provisions; now that we have deprived them of their resources, while our own are constant, abundant, and beyond their power to diminish; now that we have made them feel their own weakness and helplessness, and the overwhelming strength of the loyal population—their abettors and friends call for a compromise. Now that it is in our power to enforce the laws and vindicate the Constitution, they ask us to give way. We are to beat a retreat the moment the victory is in our grasp.

"Are, then, all the sacrifices which we have made in support of public order made to no end? Are all these preparations to maintain the majesty of the laws to be countermanded the moment they are likely to prove effectual? Is all this noble enthusiasm wasted? Was the blood of those men of Massachusetts who were murdered in the streets of Baltimore shed in vain? Was it for nothing that Ellsworth fell by the hands of an assassin, and was the solemn funeral of Winthrop a ceremony without meaning? We thought that they bled in defence of the laws of their country, and that the mighty multitude of gallant men who were their survivors would never lay down their arms till these laws were obeyed throughout all the country. Was this a dream?

"By making terms with the rebels we abandon the friends of the Union in the rebel States whom we have promised to protect and defend, and to reinstate in the power which has been wrested from them by terror and violence. Are we ready to act so base and cowardly a part as this? Are we ready to leave Western Virginia to her fate, after having engaged to vindicate her rights against the traitors? Are we willing to see Missouri again governed by Jackson? In Kentucky, in Tennessee, in North Carolina, are we prepared to deprive of their last hopes the friends of the Union, who have long anxiously looked to us for deliverance from the tyranny which crushes them to the dust? We cannot do any act which acknowledges those who now hold the power in those States as the legitimate civil authority without delivering up the friends of the Union to their mercy. Nothing short of the unconditional submission of the rebels to the authority which they have cast off, the flight or punishment of their leaders, and the installation of a new order of things, with the friends of the Union at its head, can make the slave States safe either for a citizen from the North or a loyal citizen of the South.

"That the commercial men of this city should desire a settlement of the present unhappy quarrel, and a return of the relations of trade between the North and South, is most natural. Let them have a little patience. They will not be obliged to wait long. The Southern ports are already ours, except that the time to occupy them has not quite arrived. We shall enter and possess them with the frosts and the healthful gales of winter. With the ports of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans in the occupation of the Federal forces,

with custom-houses re-established and harbors opened, we shall have a trade with the South as active and as profitable as could be obtained by any compromise, and more certain, since it would be a trade beyond the power of the malcontents to interrupt.

"The rebel leaders, it is said, desire a suspension of hostilities. If that be what they want, they have only to disband their forces, and hostilities will cease. There can be no hostilities where there is no opposition. It was they who began the war, and, if they desire that it should cease, they have only to desist from it to make its further prosecution impossible.*

Mr. Bryant's pen was not only busy in the office every day with arguments of this kind; he wrote with it also two inspiring lyrics, which had their effect upon the common mind. One of these, entitled "Not Yet," published in July, was addressed to those good friends in Europe who would willingly have witnessed our overthrow; and it told us that

> "Not yet the hour is nigh when they
> Who deep in Eld's dim twilight sit,
> Earth's ancient kings, shall rise and say,
> 'Proud country, welcome to the pit!'"

The other poetical piece, "Our Country's Call," written a month later, was a thrilling appeal for recruits, which, as it rang through the glades and over the mountains, helped to fill the ranks of the army, and to inspire them with fortitude, trust, and endurance.

Writing to one of his friends in England, Mr. Bryant thus justified the war against the strictures which were common in that country at the time:

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER —, 1861: † It is some satisfaction to me to know that, if you and I took the same view of the facts, we should not differ so much in our conclusions as you suppose. The British newspaper press has not given all the facts to its readers. In all the States in which the civil war was raging, at the date of your letter to me,

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* "Evening Post," June 25, 1861. † To Ferd. E. Field, of Evesham.

there was an ascertained majority in favor of remaining in the Union. These States are Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri. These States the rebellion attempted to wrest from us. You will agree that the war on behalf of the majority of their citizens was a just one on our part.

"We claim, also, that there is a majority in favor of the Union in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas; in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, and perhaps in Mississippi; in short, that there is no State in which the secessionists possess a clear majority, except it be South Carolina. In none of the slave States was the question whether they desired to remain in the Union submitted to the people. We of the North said to them: First show that your own citizens are in favor of separating from the Union. Make that clear, and then bring that matter before Congress, and agitate for a change of the Constitution, releasing you in a peaceful and regular way from your connection with the free States. There is no hurry; you have lived a great many years in partnership with us, and you can certainly now wait till the matter is thoroughly discussed. They refused to do anything of this nature; they had for the most part got their own creatures into the State legislatures, and into the governors' seats; they rushed the vote for separation through these legislatures; they lured troops; they stole arms from the Government arsenals, and money from the Government mints; they seized upon the Government navy yards and Government forts; in short, they made war upon the Government. Taking the whole of the Southern States together, this was done by a minority of the people.

"You will agree with me, I am sure, that we could not honorably abandon the friends of the Union in these States. You would not have the British government, if a minority in Scotland were to seize upon that country and set up a mock parliament at Edinburgh, give up the country to the insurgents.

"As to the Star blockade, it strikes everybody here as singular that the British government and public should be so ill-informed in regard to that matter. Several rivers find their way to the ocean in the channels that lead to Charleston Harbor. Some years since, the channels being too numerous, and becoming more shallow, the Government was at the expense of filling them up, which made the others, particularly Maffit's Channel, deeper. The Government has now filled up another channel, which makes Maffit's Channel still deeper, which is an

advantage to the harbor; but, in the mean time, the blockade is more easily enforced, because there is one channel the less for us to watch. If the obstructions we have placed do any mischief, they may be removed. The rebels are doing the same thing at Savannah, yet your press makes no complaint. They have obstructed one of the channels leading to their city, and we have just taken them up. Set that against what we have done at Charleston.

"You see, then, the entire groundlessness of the unfavorable conclusions formed in England. As for the Trent affair, that will be settled, and I will not say what I might concerning it, except to remark that the preparations for war with which your government accompanied its demand have left a sense of injury and insult which, I fear, will not soon pass away. But none the less do I cling to my pleasant memories of England and the excellent people I met there."

The "Trent affair," alluded to in the last paragraph, was the forcible boarding of the English mail steamer Trent, on the high seas, by Captain Wilkes, of the United States steamer San Jacinto, in order to capture Mr. Mason and Mr. Slidell, emissaries of the rebel government, on their way to England (November 8). The event produced an excited feeling in both nations. Mr. Bryant, at first, in the excess of his zeal for the cause of his country, was disposed to approve the act of the American commander: he wrote one or two articles in defence of it; but, in the progress of the discussion he was convinced that he was wrong, and readily acquiesced in the settlement afterward made.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIFTH.

TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.

A. D. 1861, 1862.

It would be impossible, if it were proper here, to follow the various incidents of a time in which every day was full of stir and import; but there were two questions raised by it, in which Mr. Bryant's action was so decided that they require a passing mention. The first of these related to the emancipation of the slaves, on which he took his position from the outset, maintaining it until the end was achieved. He regarded the slaves, who furnished supplies from the plantations to the rebel armies in the field, as a source of great strength to their cause, which emancipation would destroy. As early as June 16, 1861, he busied himself in getting up a meeting in the city, to present the subject to the people. Presiding on the occasion, he introduced Mr. Owen Lovejoy, the principal speaker, in these animated words:

"It is now just a quarter of a century since a party of men from the State of Missouri crossed the great river of the West to destroy a newspaper press, established at Alton, in Illinois, to discuss the merits of the institution of slavery and prepare the country for its extinction. They were men of the same class with those who recently invaded Kansas, and attempted to force the curse of slavery upon its unwilling colonists. The proprietor of the journal in question, the 'Alton Observer,' a bold and resolute man, armed himself and friends in defence of the freedom of speech and the right of

property, and for a while held his assailants at bay. He was overpowered; he was slain; Elijah P. Lovejoy fell pierced with three balls, his press was destroyed, the types scattered, and the 'Alton Observer' appeared no more. His blood was not shed in vain. The very State into the soil of which it sank, and the air of which resounded with the curses of his assassins, has given to the Union a Republican President—a Chief Magistrate who urges upon the slave States the policy of emancipation. But the class of men upon whom the guilt of that day is chargeable have proceeded to commit the same crimes upon a larger scale. Then they robbed and murdered one individual—they now rob a nation and murder its defenders. Thousands of young men, the flower of our Northern population, arrayed in defence of the Union, have found their graves in the region beyond the Potomac. These, say the rebels, are deaths by the fortune of war; but on the book of God they are registered as murders. My friends, I introduce to you the brother of this proto-martyr in the cause of emancipation. I present to you a man equally fearless and resolute, Owen Lovejoy, now a member of Congress from the great State of Illinois, who has never ceased since that day to protest against an institution upheld by suppressing the liberty of speech and by assassination."

The value of his example Mr. Lovejoy, writing from Washington, June 18th, acknowledged in grateful terms:

"I write to thank you," he said, "for your kindness in presiding at the meeting at Cooper Institute, and for the speech you made at the opening. I felt pleased and flattered that you should do so. It is also highly gratifying, on public grounds, that you should give the influence of your name and fame to the cause of emancipation."

When General Fremont, commanding Missouri and other western districts, issued his proclamation (August 31, 1861) declaring the freedom of slaves whose masters were in arms, Mr. Bryant gave it his earnest approval, and he censured the administration for the repeal of that brave act. Mrs. Lydia M. Child, a veteran of the antislavery cause, writing to him from Wayland, Massachusetts, September 19th, remarked:

"It seems as if all true friends of freedom *ought* to hold up the hands of Fremont, who is the first man to utter the word millions were longing to hear. The present moment is fraught with the fate of the nation. Public opinion is forming rapidly. The balance between good and evil hangs in trembling equilibrium. It seems to be the duty of every patriot to use quickly, on the right side, whatever influence he possesses. God help our country if the balance turns the wrong way! But then we shall not deserve His help, and shall have no right to expect it."

This letter expressed Mr. Bryant's own feelings; but they were in advance of the times. All through the following session, from December, 1861, to late the next year, Congress was engaged with the subject in one form or another, but without coming to any decisive conclusions. President Lincoln, in a special message (March, 1862), recommended a scheme of emancipation for the border States, which proposed a compensation to the slave-holders. It was largely approved by the Republicans, but the border States themselves clung to their system. Clearly it was not the design of Providence to get rid of the gigantic evil in any such temporizing way. The extinction of slavery in the territories and the confiscation of the property of rebels were the only measures Congress adopted; but Mr. Bryant, although he made no opposition to them, was convinced that they would be inoperative. Nothing short of an immediate and universal emancipation would, in his opinion, meet the demands of the crisis, and he urged it incessantly upon the nation.

The second subject of solicitude to him was the management of the finances. A great war occasions great expenditures, which prove a distressing embarrassment to statesmen who are intrusted with the duty of raising the means. Mr. Bryant had been very active in getting Mr. Chase appointed as head of the Treasury department, and felt more or less responsible for the action of that functionary. He was constantly in intimate relations with him, endeavoring, in his journal and by letters to him, to maintain the true principles

of finance. And, as the topic remains in a somewhat unsettled state still, it will not be without its uses to adduce some of the reasonings by which he expressed his views. His first aim was to show that the nation possessed ample means, and sources of credit, for raising all the necessary revenues. He said:

"Those who fancy that our country is in such a condition with respect to its finances, that extraordinary measures are required, in obedience to the maxim that desperate cases require desperate remedies, are greatly and deplorably mistaken. Our credit at this moment should be as good as that of Great Britain; it should be better, if there is to be any difference. Lenders, both at home and abroad, should be as willing to make advances on its account, and the desire to possess its stocks should be as general among capitalists in the Old World as in the New. All that is necessary is such a management of our resources as shall show the world that they will be faithfully applied to the performance of our engagements.

"We are the richest nation in the world in proportion to our population. Not that there are here the accumulations of capital seeking investment which are to be found in the countries of Europe, but the general comfort and competence in which the people here generally live, and the universal possession of property, are more than equivalent to their great accumulations in individual hands. What in heaps lies there is distributed here among men of all conditions. What looks for investment there is invested here in various ways—largely in farms, and tenements, and agricultural implements, and cattle. Every year our country grows more populous; every year it grows richer; every year new fields are broken with the plough, and the great unfertile wild narrowed by invading harvests; every year we become capable of sustaining greater burdens of debt and taxation. Three times have we wiped out the public debt contracted in three great wars; between the second and third of these wars our treasury so overflowed that men racked their brains with schemes for spending the superfluous hoard; and finally it was divided into portions and flung into the laps of the several States of the Union, as something for which the Federal Government would never have occasion. After the third of these wars, our credit so far outstripped that of other nations that,

when we sought to redeem the public debt by buying in the stocks, we were obliged to pay inordinate premiums. Mr. Cobb, while Secretary of the Treasury, purchased the shares, for which the Government originally received but a hundred dollars, or perhaps less, at a hundred and sixteen or a hundred and twenty dollars. Such is the vigorous and gigantic growth of public credit in the soil of the United States.

"The country is full of the means of subsistence—vast magazines of maize and wheat in the Western States waiting for a market, some of which have lain there for two years past. It is full of the precious metals—three hundred millions of dollars in coined gold, and the richest gold-mines in the world within its borders, worked by the most enterprising and active miners whom the world ever saw. All these advantages are in the hands of a sagacious, inventive, and industrious population, which knows how to obtain, from any given sources, more wealth than any other race of men.

"Nor must we leave out of the account the willingness of our people to make sacrifices for the sake of sustaining the public credit and supporting the Government in the task of quelling the Southern revolt. There never was a nation more cheerfully disposed to bear the necessary burdens. The States have voluntarily taxed themselves for purposes which properly belong to the Federal Government, in the clothing, equipment, and temporary support of the troops they have furnished. Individuals, all over the country, with a liberality which seems as if it could never be exhausted, have taxed themselves, and are taxing themselves every day, to supply our hospitals with the comforts necessary to the sick and wounded, and to furnish our great volunteer army, composed of more than a fortieth part of the population of the free States, with articles which the Federal Government does not provide. The same spirit which has prompted the flower of our young men to volunteer for the war makes those who remain at home willing to be taxed for the purpose of paying them their wages. The general feeling is one of impatience that Congress is so slow in performing this necessary duty; the tax is as much looked for, as much called for, as the suppression of the rebellion.

"Will any one undertake to say that the credit of a nation in whose condition all these circumstances meet should not be as good as that of Great Britain, already loaded with a debt enormous beyond her power to pay, every inch of whose soil was long ago brought under

tillage, and whose population only increases to increase the number of the poor? Such a country, we maintain, is under quite as great a necessity to make her exchequer-notes a legal tender in time of peace as our country in time of war. Great Britain still throws away the public money with as little apparent regard to economy as if she was not already staggering under the burden of such a debt as the world never before saw. The preparations for the war in which she was the other day about to engage with the United States, on behalf of Mason and Slidell, cost her twenty millions of dollars—yet her credit remains unshaken.

"There needs, we should suppose, no argument to show that, with all these considerations in view, the maintenance of our pecuniary credit with the civilized world is one of the simplest things in nature. All that is required is to exhibit, on the part of the Government, a disposition to lay the vast resources of our country under some reasonable contributions to provide for meeting its engagements, and money will be as easily borrowed by our Treasury as by the richest capitalist." *

Holding these views, Mr. Bryant was utterly opposed to the issue of treasury notes as a currency, and particularly to giving them a character of legal tender, to which Mr. Chase seemed inclined, and many members of Congress were determined, to resort. Mr. Chase wrote to him from the Treasury department, February 4th, to reconcile him to the scheme:

"Your feelings of repugnance to the legal-tender clause," Mr. Chase wrote, "can hardly be greater than my own; but I am convinced that, as a temporary measure, it is indispensably necessary. From various motives—some honorable, and some not honorable—a considerable number, though a small minority of the business men or people, are indisposed to sustain the United States notes by receiving and paying them as money. This minority, in the absence of any legal-tender clause, may control the majority to all practical intents. To prevent this, which would at this time be disastrous in the extreme, I yield my general views for a particular exception. To yield does

* "Evening Post," February 1, 1862.

not violate any obligation to the people, for the great majority, willing now to receive and pay their notes, desire that the minority may not be allowed to reap special advantages from their refusal to do so; and our Government is not only a government of the people, but is bound, in an exigency like the present, to act on the maxim: *Salus populi suprema est lex.*

"It is only, however, on condition that a tax adequate to interest, reduction of debt, and ordinary expenditures, be provided, and that a uniform banking system be authorized, founded on United States securities, and, with proper safeguards for specie payments, securing at once a uniform and convertible currency for the people, and a demand for national securities which will sustain their market value and facilitate loans. It is only on this condition, I say, I consent to the expedient of United States notes, in limited amount, made a legal tender.

"In giving this consent, I feel that I am treading the path of duty, and shall cheerfully, as I have always done, abide the consequences. I dare not say that I care nothing for personal consequences, but I think I may say truly that I care little for them in comparison with my obligation to do whatever the safety of the country may require."

That very day Mr. Bryant had written a protest against the notes, describing the inevitable effects of the use of them, which, in the light of subsequent events, was every word a prophecy. Day after day he recurred to the subject, warning the Government and warning the nation against the fatal expedient. On the 14th of February, 1862, under the title of "A Deluge at Hand," he said:

"The dikes of Holland were once pierced by a water-rat, and, the opening made by the animal rapidly enlarging, the ocean rushed in, sweeping away its barriers, and the land was laid under water. We might fancy some philosopher of the time standing on the dike, just after the water began to flow through the aperture, and satisfying himself with the assurance that so small a stream could do no mischief, but would only irrigate the bank and keep the grass fresh.

"We have similar assurances from financial philosophers, who favor

the paper-money scheme now before Congress. They agree with us perfectly that paper money is a bad thing, but *this* paper money is to be an exception to all other schemes of the kind. All others have ended disastrously; but this is a most innocent, carefully considered scheme, and is likely to end well. The amount of Treasury notes that we shall issue will be so small, and we shall have it so perfectly under our control, that it cannot depreciate as all other paper money has done. We make this one issue of a few millions, and we shall make no more.

"Yet, even while we write, the ocean threatens to break through the opening that has been made between it and the land. The Senate at Washington has its hand upon the fatal passage made for the waters; it has only to withdraw it, and the whole country is deluged. At this very moment, in anticipation of the passage of the legal-tender clause, there is a bill pending before the Legislature of Pennsylvania authorizing every bank of the State to increase its issue of small notes from twenty to fifty per cent of its capital stock paid in. The United States Senate, with the Treasury-note bill before it, has ample notice of the effect it will produce in this measure before the Legislature of Pennsylvania. The telegraphic despatches sent to the Western banks from this city, as soon as we heard of the passage of the legal-tender bill in the House of Representatives, advising them that the time is at hand for issuing their notes to the full extent of the license given them by the law, are equally significant of the same result. The banks stand ready to make the Treasury notes the basis of an immense circulation of their own. Those who dream of the Treasury notes supplanting the bank notes will see their mistake in less than a week after the bill passes.

"The old maxim which bids us resist the beginnings of evil was never more worthy of heed than now. In beginnings the principal mischief lies; the subsequent steps in an evil course are easily taken. The immense inflation of paper currency which the new legal-tender law will assuredly cause will create an extraordinary rise of prices, the rise of prices will increase the expenditures of the war, and before next April another great necessity will, in all probability, call for another issue of Treasury notes, and it will be made.

"Will any of our readers inform us by whom and on what occasion the following lines were written?

"'I hear a lion in the lobby roar;
Say, Mr. Speaker, shall we shut the door?
Or shall we rather let the lion in,
And try if we can turn him out again?'

"If we can discover who wrote these lines, we suggest to the Senate that they prefix them to the bill now before them as its motto, giving due credit to the author.

"Meantime, gold is becoming scarce, and bank-notes are depreciating as the chances of the passage of the Treasury-note bill increase. On Monday gold was at a premium, or, rather, paper at a depreciation of three and a half per cent. Yesterday the difference was four per cent. Pass the bill, and the difference will be yet greater, and greater still from day to day.

"In all the examples which the world has seen, the evil of an irredeemable paper currency runs its course as certainly as the small-pox or any other disease. The first effects are of such a nature that the remedy is never applied; there is no disposition to apply it. The inflation of the currency pleases a large class of persons by a rise of prices and an extraordinary activity in business. People buy to sell at higher prices; property passes rapidly from hand to hand; fortunes are made; the community is delirious with speculation. At such a time suppose Mr. Chase to step in and say: 'My friends, this fun has been going on long enough; you must be tired by this time of speculation. Let us repeal the legal-tender clause in the Treasury-note bill and return to specie payments.' What sort of reception would this proposal meet with? It would be hooted out of Congress by the very men who are now ready, at the desire of the Secretary of the Treasury, to give his scheme the forms and the sanction of law. If, in the very flush and height of the false prosperity occasioned by an inflated currency, a community or a government can be persuaded to strike down this prosperity by a sudden blow, and destroy the hopes of all who depend upon it, we shall have an example of public self-denial and self-immolation of which the world never yet saw the like. To suppose its possibility would be to suppose men drunk and sober, mad and sane, at the same moment.

"All that is required at the present moment is a sufficient tax honestly paid. As soon as capitalists see that the means are honestly

provided for the payment of the public debt, capitalists will not need to be solicited for their aid. They will come forward to offer it. Capital is always on the lookout for safe and profitable investment. Such is the lesson taught by the history of finance all the world over, here as well as in Europe, in Mr. Chase's own State and in ours, as well as in the affairs of the Federal Government."

Not confining his zeal to his arguments in the journal, and to his private letters to Mr. Chase, he remonstrated with Mr. Lincoln, to whom he addressed several notes not now recoverable, but the substance of which he was induced to incorporate in a public appeal, entitled "A Word to the Chief Magistrate of the Union."

"If a merchant about to become bankrupt were, by an unexpected turn of fortune, to be put in possession of new and large resources — if some sudden change in the market should occur, enabling him to place his tottering credit on a solid basis—we suppose we need not ask our readers what course he would take. If he were not both fool and knave, he would honestly and punctually meet his engagements, and postpone his failure to the time when he could not avoid it.

"Our Government, in the war for suppressing the Southern rebellion, has just won a series of triumphs. We have carried one rebel post after another on the Atlantic coast, and spread consternation into the interior. Norfolk, Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans are in alarm, and are making their preparations for the possibility of capture. On our midland rivers we are driving them out of their strongholds, and penetrating to the very heart of their confederacy, through a region closed against us for months, yet full of people ready to lay down their lives for the Union. Every blow we now strike at the rebellion makes it stagger, and everything portends that the war must soon be at an end, and with it the enormous sacrifices which it compels the nation to make. If the pecuniary credit of the Government was infirm a fortnight since, when the people were dispirited by the slow progress of our arms, it should revive now in its full vigor. The victories we have gained are equal, at least, to five hundred millions of dollars poured at once into the

public exchequer. Men can see that they can freely trust the Government when they see the near end of the war.

"In this flush of good fortune and well-grounded hope for the future we have clearly no occasion for desperate remedies. Those should be left for desperate circumstances. We have a measure of that nature now before both Houses of Congress in the Treasury-note bill—a measure framed and carried through both Houses in a season of discouragement, when the minds of men were in a very different state from what they are now, and ready to assent to expedients which, except in times of emergency, they would take shame to themselves for countenancing. That bill has reached such a stage that there is no hope of either House retracing its steps, and it will, in some form or other, with the fatal clause making the Treasury notes a legal tender, be laid before the President for his signature.

"It is said that Mr. Lincoln never reads the newspapers. By this he avoids wasting his time on many unprofitable matters, but we fear he shuts his eyes at the same time to many important truths. If at this moment we were of his council, or in any way permitted to speak to him on topics in which the country has a vital interest, we might address him in terms like these:

"You are now winning great credit by a wise direction of our armies. Many of the qualities which make a man competent to conduct an important lawsuit are the very ones required in a successful commander-in-chief — such as a large view of consequences and a judicious combination of expedients. You are now known to be the author of the Burnside expedition, which has gained such important victories. To your sagacity and energy, seconded by the able Secretary of War, whom your just and firm hand placed in that post at a critical moment, we owe the rapid movements of the expedition which has carried terror among the rebels in Kentucky and Tennessee, and filled the hearts of the loyal men in that region with joy. We know that, if your suggestions had been followed, the banks of the Potomac would have been cleared before this of the rebel batteries by means similar to those which have opened the rivers of Kentucky and Tennessee. You have done yourself infinite credit by consulting your individual sagacity in forming the plan of the war, and you will pardon your friends if they expect the same good sense and decision in matters of finance. There is nothing mysterious in financial operations;

nothing incomprehensible to any man of plain good sense and honest purposes. The opportunity is afforded you of distinguishing yourself as honorably in that province as in the province of war.

"You are an eminent constitutional lawyer. You know well that the framers of the Constitution meant by that instrument to prevent the emission of bills of credit, intended as currency, by the Government of the United States, and that their object in this was to prevent their being made a legal tender. The Constitution has been violated in its letter by issuing Treasury notes, payable on demand. You are now asked to violate its spirit by co-operating to make those notes a legal tender. One of the members of that body which is assigned you as your council has said that, having committed a breach of the Constitution by issuing the notes, he saw nothing to prevent us from making them a legal tender, and he therefore voted for the bill. It is as if he had said: 'We have broken into the house, and now there is no harm in committing the theft and carrying off the goods.' You like practical illustrations. I am sure the one I have given you does not express that you desire should be the morality of your administration. You are sworn to 'preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.' Can you sign such a bill as this at the moment that Providence, by the late victories, takes away all pretext or excuse for doing so?

"You are a man of business. You know that the credit of an individual depends upon two things—in the first place his ability, and in the second place his willingness, to meet his engagements. You know that our country, with its vast resources, its rich and fertile lands, and its active, industrious, and ingenious population, living in more general comfort than any other nation under the sun, is fully able to sustain the expenses of the war. Any impartial capitalist will tell you that we have only to testify the willingness of the country to provide for its expenses by a reasonable tax law, and the capital of the whole world will be at our command. There is no need that the nation, by passing the legal-tender bill, should write itself down bankrupt.

"You are an honest man; the world has added to the name your parents gave you the cognomen of 'honest.' If you sign this bill, you give the force of law to a measure which deducts a large proportion from the pittance allowed to the soldier, who at your call leaves his family, puts his life in peril, and pours out his blood for the cause of

his country. Shall we defraud these men of their hard-earned wages? The taint of depreciation is already creeping over the paper currency of the country. A little while since, your Treasury notes were at a discount of two and a half per cent; they declined in value from day to day, till now the discount is nearly five per cent. Mr. Spaulding, of the House, a champion of the legal-tender clause, contends that, if the soldier is to be cheated in this manner, the bond-holders shall be cheated also. Is it not better so to frame a law that nobody shall be cheated?

"You will be told that the Treasury notes, made a legal tender, will supplant and drive out of circulation the notes of the banks. The bankers know better. The notes will have the same effect here that the inconvertible Treasury notes of the rebel States have there; they will be heaped in the banks, and become the basis of a vast irredeemable paper circulation, the value of which will diminish every day. The banks of Pennsylvania are already, in anticipation of this, asking their Legislature for leave to increase their circulation. There is not a bank in the country that does not expect to begin to put out larger issues of its notes the moment you sign the bill. The first effect of this blow at the sanctity of all contracts, throughout the country, from the Hudson to San Francisco—the first result of this new flood of currency—will be the entire disappearance of coin, high prices, a factitious activity in business and inordinate speculation, and the final result will be commercial embarrassment and ruin. This is the history of paper money the world over, and the annals of finance show no exception to the rule.

"While such are the consequences at home, the consequences abroad will be most unfortunate. We shall dishonor our Government and our people by going into bankruptcy when our affairs were in the most prosperous condition, when our armies were proceeding from triumph to triumph, and when our country was yet full of resources. The whole world will cry out against us as guilty of breaking faith with mankind, in utter wantonness, and under the urgency of no necessity which an impartial bystander can perceive. The step which we are about to take will utterly wreck the credit we have abroad—a credit which we might even now make minister amply to our wants by wise measures which are still in our power. Are we prepared to surrender the country to this ignominy? Are we ready to sully the

pages which record the history of this war, and which are now brilliant with a new glory, by so foul a blot?

"The events of the day are throwing upon the Executive a new and heavy responsibility in this matter. For what Congress has done there was a little palliation in the somewhat discouraging state of things which then existed. The members were in perplexity as to what they should do, and their perplexity led them to do the most foolish thing possible. The greater number of them, we believe, are ready to confess that they voted for the legal-tender clause without understanding anything of the matter. They divide the responsibility among the large number of whom the two Houses are composed, and think to lighten it in that way. But the chief magistrate of the nation is expected to understand the question, especially when, as in the present instance, it is one which requires only such good strong sense as yours for its solution. Nor can he shift the blame of the consequences from his own to other shoulders. If he errs fatally for the nation in such a measure, history sets down the fault to the account of his administration, and his name is loaded with it forever. More especially is that blame to be borne by him when, as in the present instance, the changed circumstances of the country make it as certain as any axiom in the exact sciences that the credit of the country may, by the exercise of common prudence in the different branches of the Government, be placed at as proud an eminence as that of any country in the world.

"The only course, then, is, if the bill comes to your hands with the legal-tender clause retained, to return it to the two Houses of Congress with your objections, in the full confidence that you will receive the thanks of the country for your sagacity, your firmness, and your sense of justice, and that history will chronicle this as one of the noblest acts of your administration, and a beacon-light of priceless value for the future.

These appeals were not heeded; the easy way was preferred to the safe one; the fatal measure was carried; the consequences foreseen by Mr. Bryant followed, with the certainty that effect follows cause; and to this day we have reason to deplore the fatuity and blindness which inflicted "the greenback" upon the nation.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIXTH.

THE BATTLE-SUMMER.

A. D. 1862.

THE address to Mr. Lincoln, with which the last chapter closes, represents our military movements in rosy colors; but, important as they were, they had been far from satisfactory to the expectations of the country. The Government had undertaken a war of the magnitude of which neither it nor the people had formed at the beginning any adequate conception. It proposed not only the reduction to obedience of millions of angry men, but to protect thousands of miles of undefended frontier, and to guard many more thousands of miles of sea-coast, where there was scarcely a fort or a gun-boat, besides maintaining the free navigation of the Mississippi River, which ran, for the greater part of its course, through hostile territory. For these gigantic tasks its reliance was upon soldiers, improvised from the farms, the workshops, and the colleges, who had never handled a musket, and upon generals who had never set a squadron in the field, while the means were to be provided by statesmen who had before seldom found occasion for imposing a single direct tax, or for borrowing a dollar, for purposes of revenue.

That the management of affairs should have been dilatory and inefficient was only natural; but it was a proof of the resources of a Government in which the minds and hearts of the people were interested, that, in spite of these obstacles and

deficiencies, within a year of the petulant outbreak at Charleston, the most stupendous armies had been raised and equipped; great battles had been fought in various and remote parts of the country—west and east—at Brownsville, Carthage, Wilson's Creek, Belmont, Ball's Bluff, etc.; naval forces of vast proportions had been organized, which had captured, with more or less dash and brilliancy, Hatteras, Roanoke, Newbern, Port Royal, the mouth of the Savannah, and New Orleans; and the Mississippi had been cleared of the marauders that infested it by iron-clad fleets, which for the first time illustrated the signal advances of modern naval warfare, both in attack and defence.

The very success of these enterprises so animated the confidence of the people in their own capacity to deal with all sorts of obstructions that it made them impatient. On Mr. Lincoln's patriotism and energy they had every reason to rely; but they felt, at the same time, that the unprecedented pressure upon him might render him undecided and procrastinating. Why, they asked, was the central army—the great Army of the Potomac—kept wallowing in the mud in the near neighborhood of Washington? General McClellan, who was in command of it, and other military leaders, alleged the necessities of organization and discipline in excuse for this slowness of movement, but the grumblers rejoined that other great bodies, with even fewer facilities of preparation, had accomplished great deeds while this body was lying idle; or, if not idle, engaging in expeditions, as at Yorktown, which proved fruitless, or worse than fruitless.

Mr. Bryant was one of the discontented, and it showed his frankness that, with all his personal regard for the President, he still vented his dissatisfaction both in the columns of his journal and in letters to members of the administration. To Mr. Lincoln he wrote, date not given, as follows:

"Allow me to say a very few words on a subject in which the friends of the administration and the country in this quarter feel a

deep interest. We are distressed and alarmed at the inactivity of our armies in the work of putting down the rebellion. I have been pained to hear lately, from persons of zealous loyalty, the expression of a doubt as to whether the administration is in earnest in desiring the speedy annihilation of the rebel forces. We, who are better informed, acquit the administration of the intention to prolong the war, though we cannot relieve it from the responsibility. These inopportune pauses, this strange sluggishness in military operations, seem to us little short of absolute madness. Besides their disastrous influence on the final event of the war, they will have a most unhappy effect on the elections here, and we fear they have had in other States. The election of Seymour as Governor of the State of New York would be a public calamity, but it may happen if the army is kept idle.* A victory or two would almost annihilate his party, and carry in General Wadsworth triumphantly. If what is apparently the present policy be persisted in by the generals who conduct the war, the Union, in our view, is lost, and we shall be convinced that Providence has decided the ruin of our republic."

His strictures upon the administration and his zeal for emancipation procured Mr. Bryant a good many remonstrances from friends who thought he was going too far. To one of these, Dr. Dewey, he returned the following justification:

"New York, August 17, 1862: . . . I *must* answer your letter a little. Neither you nor I understand war nor medicine; but of medicine we know enough not to employ a physician who regularly doses all his patients, nor one who proposes to cure an inflammation of the bowels by poulticing the little finger. *I* judge of the merits of military men in the same way. Again, I have a right to choose between the opinions of men well acquainted with the military art, and I know that officers of great merit hold that McClellan has mismanaged the campaign throughout. Pope, one of the most successful of them,

* This letter, a rough draft, without date, was probably written some time in the summer of 1862. Seymour, the Democratic candidate, was elected Governor in November of that year, by a large majority, over James Wadsworth, the Republican candidate, and a very popular general and citizen.

does so. (I *know* this;) so does Wadsworth; so does General Hitchcock, a veteran officer personally kind toward McClellan, and disposed to judge him candidly (I speak from personal knowledge); so also, I have reason to believe, do hundreds of other officers.

"What the 'Evening Post' has said in regard to the course taken by the Government I said in still stronger terms to Mr. Lincoln himself ten days since, when I went to Washington for the purpose. With me was Mr. K——, a millionaire (or millionary—which?) of this city, who said to him that unless the war was prosecuted with greater energy—far greater—and the confiscation and emancipation act carried into vigorous execution, not sixty days would elapse before the Government securities would be so depressed that the administration would not have a dollar to carry on the war.

"Mr. Lincoln knows that McClellan is wanting in some of the necessary qualities of a general officer. He said to Mr. Field: 'McClellan is one of the most accomplished officers in all the army. No man organizes or prepares an army better, but when the time for action comes he is greatly deficient.'

"As to emancipation, I have none of the fears which you entertain, and the conduct of the blacks already freed—more than fifty thousand of them—convinces me that there is no ground for them. Their peaceful and docile behavior assures me that we have neither 'wild disorder nor massacre to dread.' The rebellion has buried its roots so firmly into the social system of the South that they must both be pulled up together.

"You anticipate a bad effect upon the recruiting service from such criticisms on the conduct of the Government as the 'Evening Post' had thought it necessary to make. The mischief was done before the 'Evening Post' began to criticise. A gloomy and discouraged feeling prevailed, throughout this city and this State at least, which seemed to make the raising of the necessary number of volunteers hopeless. The only remedy that the case seemed to admit was the adoption by the press and by public speakers of a more vigorous style of animadversion on the conduct of the war, and the representations of disinterested persons made personally to the President. Mayor Opdyke, William Curtis Noyes, Dr. Charles King, and many others, singly or in pairs, have visited Washington for this purpose. There is not one of these men to whom such conclusions as you have reached

would not be matter of exceeding surprise. They have all regarded the cause of the Union as drifting to ruin if instant and powerful means were not applied to give things a new direction. I believe their representations, and the language held in public meetings, and to some degree also the comments of the press, have had a certain effect. I hear this morning that it was Pope who recommended Halleck to the President as a fit person to force McClellan into action, and to push on the war with vigor. Other proceedings of the administration within a few days give token that it is waking to a sense of the danger we are in from causes very much like those of which you speak.

"I have written thus largely because I had some things to say which I cannot print. If I could, I would have received your rebuke without a reply."

The visit to Washington, to which the foregoing letter refers, was made at the urgent request of many distinguished residents of the city, and, although Mr. Bryant was disinclined to this kind of intervention, he left his country home, in the midst of the August heats, to do what he could toward stimulating the activities of the Cabinet. His interview with Mr. Lincoln was prolonged and earnest, and he expressed himself hopefully as to the results of it after he came back; but the allusion in the following letter is all the account that we have of it from his pen:

"Roslyn, September 15, 1862:* Your letter of the 7th instant makes a very natural suggestion. Lest you should suppose that the real friends of the country in this neighborhood have been remiss, I would inform you that this very method which you mention has been tried with Mr. Lincoln. Some of our best and most eminent men have visited Washington to remonstrate with him, but with only partial effect. The influence of Seward is always at work, and counteracts the good impressions made in the interviews with men of a different class. I was strongly pressed to go to Washington myself, and went somewhat reluctantly, not having any confidence in my powers of per-

* To the Rev. H. N. Powers, of Chicago.

suasion. I saw Mr. Lincoln, and had a long conversation with him on the affairs of the country, in which I expressed myself plainly and without reserve, though courteously. He bore it well, and I must say that I left him with a perfect conviction of the excellence of his intentions and the singleness of his purposes, though with sorrow for his indecision. A movement is now on foot to bring the influence of our best men to bear upon him in a more concentrated manner, by a wider concert among them. Meetings have been held for that purpose and a committee raised."

Unfortunately, when the Army of the Potomac was set in movement, it won few laurels. The rank and file fought like heroes, but the officers were incapable. Banks was driven from Virginia into Maryland; Fremont was worsted in Western Virginia; and McClellan's own campaign against Richmond, by way of the James, came near ending in his destruction. His seven days of battle on the Peninsula, dreadful slaughters disguised under the name of a change of base, were in reality retreats, and at Malvern Hill he was only saved by the gun-boats on the river (June 23d–July 1st). When, recovering from the disaster, the seat of war was again transferred to the neighborhood of Washington, the generals who followed McClellan in rapid succession — Pope, Burnside, Hooker—though gallant officers, were not skilful leaders, and a series of engagements—at Cedar Mountain, Bristow Station, Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and elsewhere—desperately and brilliantly contested as they were, failed to advance the national cause. All summer long "the noise of battle rolled" among the hills, and yet, in September, Lee, the Confederate chief, was in Maryland, threatening the free States. He was fortunately defeated and turned backward by McClellan, at Antietam; but the winter opened, and the year closed in gloom rather than in glory.

There was, in the opinion of the "Evening Post," a reason for these failures in the "fixed idea," which had got possession of the civil and military managers, that the one object of the war was the capture of the rebel capital, Richmond. From

the beginning the cry had gone forth, "On to Richmond"; and it is no little evidence of the sagacity of Mr. Bryant's judgment that he opposed the notion as a fatal error. "Nothing short of a surgical operation," he said, "will get this delusion out of the heads of our public men."

"They think, if this purpose can be accomplished, they will have disposed effectively of the rebellion, so that our distracted people may give themselves no further trouble about traitors or treason. Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet, when they see our armies approaching their stronghold, and likely to possess it, will, of course, remain in the place and surrender. They are too chivalric to run away out of the back door, and they will propose, as one of the terms of capitulation, to come into the Union again on the old terms. The whole bubble of revolt will then go out like a snuffed candle. The rebel armies will be dispersed, the rebel congress incontinently declared an abortion, or never to have come to a birth, the rebel constitution be burnt at the four cross-roads, and the rebel Confederacy, like a great many other confederacies that preceded it, go

'—glimmering to the shades, as things that were;
A school-boy's dream, the wonder of an hour.'

"An expectation of this sort alone accounts for the singular pertinacity with which the plan of the capture of Richmond has been pursued. General Scott first laid the egg, and incubated it all the time he was in command. It was the object of McDowell when he marched into the fatal snares of Bull Run; it was the sublime study of McClellan for eighteen months, when he undertook the campaign of the Peninsula, to carry it out—with what results we know. Pope was sent to the Rapidan to help him in the process; Burnside flung himself upon the sharp spikes back of Fredericksburg to attain it; and Hooker was enveloped in the wild destruction of Chancellorsville. For the same end we have tried it in front, we have tried it from behind, we have tried it from the sides, and, though always in vain, though we have been repulsed a dozen times, and sacrificed fine armies in the effort, the official mind at Washington still clings to it as the one thing needful. It will give up everything else, but Richmond it will not give up; it

will allow Pennsylvania to be ravaged, but Richmond must be watched; it will call our young men from their shops and harvest-fields to defend the frontiers, but the veterans must keep their eyes on Richmond; it will even allow the political metropolis to be threatened by a hostile army, to be visited by a hostile cavalry, but it will not recall troops who might defend the frontier and the capital, because they are squinting at the distance of forty or a hundred miles toward the intrenchments of Richmond. It is our fixed idea, our enchantment, our pleasant illusion, our fatuity. . . .

"But supposing us to get into Richmond—what then? We have no idea that the rebel cabinet keep a large amount of supplies in that city, or any which they would not carry off in the event of an assault. Their government itself is a migratory one, and would be just as valid and effective at Knoxville, or Petersburg, or Montgomery, as it is in its present location. By the capture of Richmond, therefore, we should drive Jefferson Davis and his followers somewhere else, and possess one more Virginian town, difficult to hold and of little use to us, ever so well held. It is the centre, it is true, of an important railroad system, but not of an indispensable railroad system. The same communications can be made elsewhere, if not with the same facility, at least with certainty. But, if Richmond were of ten times the importance that it is, the capture of it would not compensate us for the loss of Washington, which would carry with it certainly the loss of Baltimore, and perhaps that of Philadelphia. Not a solitary man should be spared to the former object so long as a single doubt exists of the perfect security of our seat of Government. Suppose that Lee should overcome Meade and march upon Washington: what satisfaction would it be to be told that General Dix had invested Richmond? Suppose Meade defeated: would the people of the country ever forgive the administration? Does it imagine that the awful failure to re-enforce Hooker, at the critical moment, on the Rappahannock, can be repeated? It knows better; it knows that it will be handled with a severity that has as yet no parallel in our annals if it commits that mistake a second time; and hence we infer that it is absolutely sure of success on the Potomac, or it would not authorize enterprises on the Pamunkey. . . ." *

* "Evening Post," July 1st.

Mr. Bryant made no pretension to a knowledge of strategy, but he conversed a great deal with prominent military men and others, whose careful studies qualified their judgments; and his criticisms of military movements were always founded upon consultations with what he deemed competent authorities.

It was this want of a determined success on the part of the Union army in Virginia that encouraged the French Emperor, our bitterest enemy in Europe, not excepting the English upper classes, to put forth, through his Secretary of Foreign Affairs, a project of intervention in our difficulties by foreign governments. Mr. Bigelow, who was acting as Chargé d'Affaires at Paris, wrote to Mr. Bryant of this scheme as soon as it was broached, and Mr. Bryant answered him as follows:

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 3, 1862: Your view of the proposal of the French government that there shall be a suspension of arms for six months, to give the great powers of modern Europe an opportunity to mediate between the acknowledged governments, as to the rebellion, is the one which almost universally prevails here. Everybody sees that it is neither more or less than asking us to give up what we are fighting for. The most favorable construction that can be put upon it makes it a device to give the rebel government an opportunity to get on its legs again, to breathe, recruit, and take a new start. That is, on the supposition that the interference is to end with the procuring of an armistice, which is not probable. The top of the wedge being once inserted, the rest would be driven in after it. An interference of the nature proposed once allowed, would draw after it interferences of the most decided and domineering character, and transfer to our continent the system of dictation by which three or four sovereigns give law to Europe. I do not think that the French ministry will be much pleased with the manner in which the project is received here. The most blatant of the Peace Party would not venture upon the unpopularity of proposing a cessation of hostilities. You put the case strongly against England in the letter to the 'Independence Belge.' Notwithstanding the expression of the French Emperor's desire to interfere, and the refusal of his proposal by Great Britain, the feeling of dissatisfaction with Great Britain is much

stronger than against France. It pervades all classes; the old British party, who looked at everything British through a prism, are reached by it, give up their old prejudices, and scold vehemently against England. At least this is the case with very many of them. The English have lost more ground in public opinion in America within the past year and a half than they can redeem in a century."

In his journal he did not fail to reprehend both the Emperor and the English, and the latter with the more severity, because, as a nation of constitutional government and anti-slavery sentiment, it was basely surrendering its traditional glories to its jealousies and its prejudices. From the miserable despot of France nothing good was to be expected; but from a nation which possessed genuine liberty, the result of many years of noble endeavors, and from the countrymen of Wilberforce, Clarkson, and Sharpe, we had hoped, at least, for independence of judgment, if not sympathy. The war, it is true, had not yet assumed a distinctively antislavery character; but it was none the less a war for constitutional rights, and little sagacity was required to discern that if not avowedly a stroke for universal freedom, the success of the North must no less shatter forever the stupendous structure built upon the enforced labor of the negro. England, however, did not see it, or would not see it, and plied us with ridicule and abuse, while she furtively gave what aid she could to the cause of the slave-holders.

The financial outlook of the nation at the time was, perhaps, darker than the military prospect. Mr. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, had made herculean efforts to raise the needed revenues for the support of nearly a million of men in the field; he had resorted to loans, to Treasury notes, to taxations, and to all the usual appliances of governments in hours of extreme need; and the people had responded to his calls with ready and even cheerful alacrity. But his efforts were handicapped by his error in issuing an irredeemable legal tender. Enlightened economists had exposed the folly of the step; but their demonstrations were in vain. Mr. Bryant,

who, as we have seen, was among the most earnest of the number, was now inclined to regard the situation with despair. Referring to a new bill introduced in Congress to increase the amount of paper money, he said:

"Since Congress committed the great error of making Treasury notes a legal tender, we have had little heart for discussing questions of finance. When we took that plunge, we foresaw consequences in regard to which we have not been disappointed. It is an ungrateful task for journalists holding the views that we do to balance one scheme of paper money against another, and endeavor to decide with which of them lies the advantage over the other, but the circumstances of the time seem to force the duty upon us.

"In the quagmire upon which we have landed there are places in which the footing is worse than in others; there are spots in which the adventurer who attempts to traverse it may sink only to the armpits; there are others where he will be sure to sink out of sight, and to one of these latter the scheme of Mr. Thaddeus Stevens, now before the House of Representatives, offers to conduct us. If we follow him, we shall walk deliberately into the deepest part of the bog. We can conceive of no more atrocious defiance of the principles of public credit, no more open proclamation of national bankruptcy, no more desperate renunciation of all claim to pecuniary confidence, than is embodied in his scheme. It proposes to strike from under the credit of the Federal Government its last props, repealing all the provisions of law which give the Treasury paper a value beyond that of old newspapers, by still keeping up a connection with the precious metals, and allowing them to be converted into something better; and it proposes to let out another flood of inconvertible paper money, which, rapidly depreciating, must almost immediately be followed by another." *

Among the expedients adopted by Mr. Chase for the relief of his embarrassments had been the plan of a general banking system, founded upon the pledge of national securities for the redemption of circulating notes, which he hoped would enlarge the demand for his bonds, and give also a uniform value

* "Evening Post," July 14, 1863.

to the paper money which was in universal use. This scheme was, in many respects, the same which Mr. Bryant and Mr. Leggett had helped to establish in the State of New York many years before, and Mr. Bryant concurred in its main features. But he was displeased with certain of its details, and apprehensive lest the close and consolidated form in which it appeared should confer a dangerous ascendency and power of interference on the central Government. As usual with him in such cases, he expressed his objections with freedom, which drew from Mr. Chase the following private remonstrance:

"WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 13, 1862: The kind and liberal appreciation which my public conduct has always received from the 'Evening Post' makes me more than ordinarily solicitous to avoid its just censure. Of course, I was not a little pained to read the article entitled 'The Financial Views of Mr. Chase.'

"A public man, in times of terrible trial, must often adopt expedients, not inherently immoral, which he would, in a normal condition of things, avoid. This would, I think, justify my support of a national system of banking associations, even were the plan intrinsically defective. The support of the demand, which will be created by the enactment of the plan, for bonds, will enable the Government to borrow at reasonable rates. Without that support, I confess I see nothing less than the Serbonian bog before me for our finances. In the conflict of opinions concerning it, I almost despair.

"The choice is narrow. National credit supported by the organization of capital under national law, or limitless issues of notes, and —what beyond? I don't wish to look at it, or to administer the finances with no other road than that open before me.

"Is it quite right, when I am struggling with almost overwhelming difficulties; when—shall I be bold to say it?—after having achieved results which, at the outset, I thought impossible, I just reach the point where not to be sustained is, perhaps, to be utterly defeated; is it quite right to say of my 'central idea' that it is impossible because gold is not of uniform value at Chicago and at New York? Who ever thought of value not being uniform because not capable of sustaining such a test? Why not take my language in its common-sense acceptation, that uniform value means that value which is practically uni-

form—paying travelling bills everywhere, and debts everywhere in the country, having everywhere substantially equal credit founded on equal security?

"Again, is it quite right to say that no aid to the Treasury is to be expected from the plan when, in the very same article, a like plan in New York is said to have advanced the bonds of New York some ten per cent above other bonds? In the report I admit frankly that I do not expect from it direct aid in money; that is, no such direct aid as is afforded by issues of circulation, or by loans. Such aid can only come when bonds are paid for in coin or notes, and no necessity exists for retiring the notes to prevent inflation. But indirect aid is not less valuable than direct, and the indirect will be immediate and immense; and it will be derived from the imparting of that strength to national bonds which the similar New York plan imparts to New York bonds. It will facilitate immediate and future loans, and be of vast advantage to every interest.

"I am obliged to prepare this letter very hurriedly, but you will get my ideas.

"My country engages all my best earthly thoughts and affections. Most willingly will I sacrifice all for her. To serve her, my labors have been incessant. Must I fail for the want of concord among her most devoted lovers? Most truly yours,

"S. P. CHASE."

Mr. Bryant's reply to the Secretary, I regret to say, is not to be found, but I do not discover that his journal was swerved from its course by these expostulations.

A summer of almost incessant battles, with its excitements and its meetings—now to provide for disabled soldiers, or refugees, or freedmen, and now to push on the Government to more active exertions, in many of which Mr. Bryant participated—was not very favorable to literary effort. But it would seem from the following letters that, if he was not doing much for himself, others were not unmindful of his fame.

"NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 7, 1862:* I thank you both for your kind wishes and the Latin version of my poem ('Thanatopsis'), which

* To the Rev. S. H. Coxe, D. D.

you have been so obliging as to send me. However slight may be the merit of the original, the thoughts seem to acquire dignity when clothed in the majestic language of Virgil; and, if they had the capacity to feel and express gratitude, would make their acknowledgments to you for the becoming dress you have given them."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 3, 1862:* The additional translations of my poems in the 'Sontagsblatt,' forwarded by you, have arrived; and I find them equally well done—so far as a foreigner may be allowed to judge—with their predecessors—specimens of that skill in rendering the poetry of other countries into your noble language in which your countrymen excel all other nations with whose literature I am acquainted. Your dedicatory words are only too complimentary."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 3, 1862:† I thank you for the translations you have sent me of three of my poems, and the kind letter with which they were accompanied. My verses have gained in the dress you have given them—a grace which I could not give them in English. They are more faithful in rendering the meaning of the original than French translations of English poetry generally are; and yet, so far as a foreigner may be allowed to judge, they are as spirited and easy as if written without that constraint to which a faithful translator is obliged to submit. . . .

"For your good wishes concerning my country I also thank you. This cruel war is a frightful state of things, but from it I hope will result good to our country and to mankind—the extinction of the accursed institution of slavery, and the restoration of our Union on the basis of universal liberty—a result which I look for with confidence.

"In the hope that the freedom of your country may not cost so dear, I am, dear sir, yours, very truly."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 18, 1862:‡ When I got your letter the other day I was about to answer it immediately, but the bad news from Fredericksburg came, and I had no heart to write. The battle

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* To Dr. Adolf Laun, of Oldenburg, Germany.

† To M. P. Jônain, Epaignes, Charente Inférieure, France.

‡ To R. H. Dana, Esq.

was a dreadful piece of butchery, for which I fear General Halleck is responsible. They say that the officers of Burnside's corps were all against making the attempt to carry the enemy's intrenchments. . . . You find many things amiss in our people, and I cannot deny that you have reason, but I do not see that any change in our political constitution would mend matters. Every arrangement for making laws and keeping order among men has its better side and its worse side; and it is only a very impartial and unprejudiced mind that can strike a just balance between them and truly decide which, taking all things together, is the best. You like the British form of government, but you see its operations at a distance. My attention has lately been called to the picture of the moral condition of England, given in its daily journals, and it seems to me that it reveals a frightful corruption of morals in the higher class. What shall we say of the woman Anonyma, with nearly half the peerage in her train, bowing around her carriage in public? What of two men pommelling each other to death in the ring, with a throng of titled personages looking on, who had put the price of admission at two guineas to keep out the rabble? Highway robberies and murders have grown so frequent in London, the robberies often perpetrated at noonday, that the place is hardly more safe than Johnson described it to be in his satire. But you go on to show that the character of our people is improving in this season of adversity. I agree with you there; I see the same result. Perhaps much of what has awakened your disgust was the effect of our temporal prosperity. But you know I hate to dispute. Let us be thankful that God is bringing so much good out of the terrible evil that has fallen on us."

Mr. Bryant was as acutely alive to the horrors of the war and its consequences as any of his friends; even more so, perhaps, as his position of journalist gave him a nearer and more interior view of the mistakes made in the conduct of it, and of the dreadful calamities by which they were followed. But he found means of relieving the depressions of the time by compelling himself to renewed exertions in his journal and in attendance upon public meetings to help forward the common cause, and by devoting his leisure hours to composition in a remote and, to him, somewhat novel field. It was in the

winter of 1862–'63 that he made those excursions into the regions of fairy which are known in his poetical works as "Sella" and "The Little People of the Snow." One would hardly suspect them to be the productions of a jaded and aged editor, living in the midst of a fierce civic conflict. They seem rather the pastime of some fresh and buoyant young man, enjoying the tranquillities and charms of scholastic retirement. They entice us wholly from the actual and the present into other worlds, which the water-nymphs and snow-fays inhabit, and which dazzle the fancy by their strange splendors, and awaken the emotions to weird and unearthly sympathies. The poet began at the same time a third poem, in a kindred vein, which he called "A Tale of Cloudland," and which is given in his works, imperfect as it is, for the sake of its biographic bearings.* As in the former pieces he had visited

> '—mighty groves
> Far down the ocean-valleys, softly tinged
> With orange and with crimson—'

and mountain vaults with flakes piled up

> "In shapely colonnade and glistening arch,"

and lit by Northern gleams—so in this piece he sought the misty heights where the rains and tempests are born, and gorgeous palaces and airy castles stand lofty and fair in the luminous golden sunshine, filled with the beautiful forms that come to us in dreams.

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* See "Poetical Works," vol. ii, Appendix.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVENTH.

THE PROCLAMATION OF FREEDOM.

A. D. 1863.

On the first day of January, 1863, President Lincoln issued his long-wished-for proclamation declaring the slaves in certain States, which persisted in their insurrection against the Government, henceforth and forever free. He had given warning that he would do so in September of 1862, and was as good as his word. It was not so comprehensive and positive a document in its terms as Mr. Bryant and others, who had assiduously urged this step from the beginning, desired; but it was a movement forward, with which they were not going to quarrel.* They approved and rejoiced. But on the insurgents the first effect of it was, to augment their bitterness and quicken their zeal, while it alienated many in the border States, and furnished them an opportunity to allege that the entire object of the war had been changed. It was no longer, they said, a political but a moral war, and their appeals were listened to. In fact, the earlier warlike enthusiasm had cooled; the incessant demands for men and money were painfully felt; and, stupendous as the military operations had been, the results were not yet regarded as decisive. General Lee, with an adequate force, was again making his way tow-

* Mr. Bryant was of the opinion, which John Quincy Adams had suggested many years before, that the Government had a right to emancipate all the slaves as a military expedient.

ard the free States, having entered Maryland on the 25th of June, almost in sight of the battle-field of Antietam, and it was doubtful for a time whether the scene of contest would not be transferred from Virginia to Pennsylvania. Volunteers, in consequence, could not be easily raised, and a conscription was resorted to, which was unpopular, not only on its own account, but because of its exceptional provisions allowing those who were rich enough to purchase substitutes. In the cities and larger towns, and particularly in the city of New York, hostility to the measure culminated in acts of violence. For nearly three days the streets of the metropolis were in the hands of a mob, which set fire to the Negro Orphan Asylum, assailed the arsenals, and menaced a wide-spread destruction of private property (July). Newspapers which had vigorously supported the war were among the principal objects of its hatred. Of course, the "Evening Post" was included in the number, and for two days and nights it was compelled to barricade its doors, and to maintain a vigilant watch against the enemy. No assault was, however, made, the police, as soon as they had ascertained the real extent of the danger, having acted with great efficiency, in the absence of the militia companies that had gone to the front. During this excitement the editors of the threatened journals evinced a manly courage in bidding defiance to the angry multitudes, and approving the authorities in their efforts to restore the peace.

This outbreak would have been far more formidable but for the cheering news which the telegraphs brought from the battle-fields: first, of the great victory achieved by the Army of the Potomac, under General Meade, after three days of awful slaughter, at Gettysburg, which put an end to the advances of Lee; and, secondly, of the no less signal victory of the Army of the Mississippi, under General Grant, at Vicksburg, which seemed to annihilate for the moment the cause of the rebels in the southwest. These grand events disheartened the fomenters of revolt at home, while they inflicted blows upon the insurrection which staggered it for the rest

of the summer. Followed up in the autumn by the splendid doings at Chattanooga, under Rosecrans and Grant, and the effective movements of Burnside in East Tennessee, the prospects of the country brightened rapidly, and the year may be said to have closed in the rosiest flashes of hope.

Mr. Bryant was, of course, profoundly absorbed by these important public events, but they did not prevent him from recurring to the solaces of poetic exertion. He wrote, in the intervals of his editorial tasks, the poems entitled "The Poet" and "The Path," which are, however, not among his best, and he began a heavier work, destined to become the crowning effort of his life. Writing to Mr. Dana, he discloses incidentally the new direction his studies had taken:

"ROSLYN, MAY 14, 1863: How this war drags on! Yet I cannot help believing that it will end suddenly, almost unexpectedly, as the Indian War did in Florida, twenty years ago, when General Worth penetrated to the Everglades, to the wigwams where the savages had their families, and they, seeing that further resistance was hopeless, yielded themselves as submissive as lambs. We have all along, in my opinion, conducted the war on a false principle, weakening our forces by the loosest dispersion, and strengthening the rebels by keeping them in a compact body, when there was no necessity for all this. I think I see symptoms of a disposition to depart from this policy; and, when we do, I shall conclude the war is near an end.

"I have been looking over Cowper's translation of Homer lately, and comparing it with the original. It has astonished me that one who wrote such strong English as Cowper in his original compositions, should have put Homer, who wrote also with simplicity and spirit, into such phraseology as he has done. For example, when Ulysses, in the fifth book of the Odyssey, asks, 'What will become of me?' Cowper makes him say:

'—what destiny at last
Attends me?'

and so on. The greater part is in such stilted phrase, and all the freedom and fire of the old poet is lost."

No intimation is here given that he had attempted to improve upon the Homeric renderings of Cowper, but such was the case. Going into his library about this time, I saw upon his table a fine edition of the Iliad and Odyssey (an Oxford edition, I think) which some friend had kindly presented to him. I took it up to examine it, and, as I did so, a bit of manuscript dropped from between the leaves, which he said was a rapid version in blank verse of some passages in the fifth book of the Odyssey. He gave me permission to read it, and, having read it, I remarked that it seemed to me a more beautiful translation than any I had yet read in English. "Do you think so," he replied; "I was only trying my hand on the Greek to see how much of it I still retained." He afterward completed the fifth book, which, at the request of Mr. James T. Fields, was printed in the "Atlantic Monthly," where it attracted no little attention on the part of scholars. As he was collecting some of his more recent poems into a new volume, published at the close of 1863, under the title of "Thirty Poems," * this translation was included in it,† together with

* "Thirty Poems." By William Cullen Bryant. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1864.

† In this edition it was accompanied by this note, referring to the translation of Cowper:

"It may be esteemed presumptuous in the author of this volume to attempt a translation of any part of Homer in blank verse after that of Cowper. It has always seemed to him, however, that Cowper's version had very great defects. The style of Homer is simple, and he has been praised for fire and rapidity of narrative. Does anybody find these qualities in Cowper's Homer? If Cowper had rendered him into such English as he employed in his 'Task,' there would be no reason to complain; but in translating Homer he seems to have thought it necessary to use a different style from that of his original work. Almost every sentence is stiffened by some clumsy inversion; stately phrases are used when simpler ones were at hand, and would have rendered the meaning of the original better. The entire version has the appearance of being hammered out with great labor, and as a whole it is cold and constrained; scarce anything seems spontaneous; it is only now and then that the translator has caught the fervor of his author. Homer, of course, wrote in idiomatic Greek, and, in order to produce either a true copy of the original, or an agreeable poem, should have been translated into idiomatic English. I am almost ashamed, after this censure of an author whom, in the main, I admire so much as I

"Sella" and "The Little People of the Snow." These familiar letters refer to various incidents of the time.

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 13, 1863:* I am glad to see you so well employed as you are, in giving us good old English books in your handsome editions. The dedication to me of your edition of Fuller's "Good Thoughts in Bad Times" I shall certainly receive as a great honor, though I have done little to earn it."

"SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 20th:† Several weeks ago I wrote to Dr. Bellows a little of the gratitude I feel for your kindness in honoring my lecture and our people with a copy of the exquisite poem, 'Waiting by the Gate.' . . . The lectures were very successful, so far as the public interest in them and the pecuniary results in favor of our organ fund were concerned. The best lecture-hall in the city was completely filled to hear the introductory on Mr. Bryant, and, although the address occupied an hour and three quarters, there was the closest and most complimentary attention to the close. It was my first attempt at reading poems in public in connection with a lecture. But inexperience in that delicate and difficult art could not prevent the merit of the verse appealing to the taste of the audience; and the response of mind and heart to 'Thanatopsis,' 'The Snow Shower,' 'The Conqueror's Grave,' 'Seventy-six,' 'Robert of Lincoln,' 'O Country, Marvel of the Earth,' and the breathless stillness, so that not a phrase or cadence of the melody, 'Waiting by the Gate,' should be lost, gave me a higher opinion of the capacity of a California audience than I had formed before. I prize the autograph of the last poem among my chief treasures, and in the hope that, for the honor of our literature, the 'Waiting by the Gate' may be an experience of many years. I am," etc.

"ROSLYN, MAY 14th:‡ My wife and I read your second 'Talk with the Camp' together, and were much edified. She thought you

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do Cowper, to refer to my own translation of the fifth book of the Odyssey. I desire barely to say that I have endeavored to give the verses of the old Greek poet at least a simpler presentation in English, and one more conformable to the genius of our language."

* To James T. Fields, Esq.

† From the Rev. T. Starr King.

‡ To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

had written nothing better, and I was half inclined to agree with her. You cannot think how it consoles me and puts me in spirits when I see an old fellow at your time of life outdoing himself. I read the lives of literary Englishmen, and find them nearly good for nothing after a certain age that shall be nameless, and the effect is dispiriting. I declare I think that the intellect here retains its vigor longer in this country than in theirs, with all their boasts of the healthfulness of their climate.

"As to the necessity of wars, I find it somewhat difficult to go along with you. It does not seem to me that they are more necessary than religious persecutions. Henry IV of France was wise beyond his age when he contemplated a tribunal for settling the differences between nations without a resort to force. But we *have* wars whether they be necessary or not, just as we have had religious persecutions, imprisonments, and burnings for heresy. And, while we have wars, we must try to extract what good from them we can."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 19th:* I wish I had written to you as was becoming, and as my wife more than once suggested to me, the moment I received your letter, to tell you how glad we all were that Charles† had come out of the battle of which you speak unhurt. To be engaged in a bloody conflict like that, and to be alive at the end of it, is like going to the gate of death knocking defiantly, and being allowed after that affront to return

'To the warm precincts of the cheerful day.'

I hope there will not be many more such battles; but who can say? I feel that the rebel cause is on a decline that must put an end to it sooner or later, as inevitably as old age will carry off the longest liver of us all; but who shall say when the oldest of your or my neighbors will be called for? Perhaps, if he does not chew tobacco, he will live to ninety-nine. I do not expect so long a date, comparatively, for the rebellion. It is like a dying man kept alive from day to day by stimulants, to the wonder of everybody. When it goes, I expect to see it go all at once; life will not linger in some of the members after the

* To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

† A son of Dr. Dewey, who was a soldier in the Army of the Potomac.

rest are lifeless. After the head is cut off, there will be no wriggling in the limbs."

"ROSLYN, JULY 29th:* Why were you not planted here beside me, where I could say, or would be glad to say, with Tibullus:

"'Me mea paupertas vitae traducet inertia,
Dum meus assiduo laceat igne focus.
Ipse seram teneres maturo tempere vites,
Rusticus et facili grandia poma mana.'

"Did Tibullus mean to say that he kept his parlor-fire burning all the year round? Let us try his lines in English:

"'May my small wealth procure a life of ease,
Upon my hearth the fire be always bright,
The tender vines, the fruitful apple-trees,
To plant in their due time be my delight.'

I came down to Roslyn last night, and, instead of the *grandia poma*, the big apples Tibullus speaks of, found some pears, the kind called Osband's Summer, just ripened for me on their dwarf trees, and very handsome, with their orange skin and scarlet cheek."

"SHARON, CONN., AUGUST 11th:* I have just returned from Williamstown, whose classic soil we trod together more than fifty years ago. I had supposed you might have forgotten me, but the kind mention you made of me in a letter written to the Rev. Mr. Durfee, in 1859, assures me that I still live in your recollection. Your letter was published in Mr. Durfee's 'History of the College,' which I saw for the first time during my recent visit to the college. We had hoped to meet a good proportion of our class at the Commencement, but Morris and myself were all who obeyed the summons to be there. Most of the others excused themselves on account of advancing years and failing health. Your poem touched Morris and me to the heart. I was required to read it as the closing exercise of the public meeting of the alumni on Tuesday, after the address of Professor Hascom. I

* To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

* From Charles F. Sedgwick, Esq.

performed the duty as well as I could, but wish I had been able to do it better." *

"ROSLYN, SEPTEMBER 24, 1863: † DEAR DOCTOR OF DIVINITY.—There are three D's for you—three semilunar fardels, as Dr. Cox called them, one more than you ordinarily get. You see what a fine thing it is to be of a munificent disposition, and to have ready a surplus of capital letters to bestow on one's friends upon proper occasions. I did not intend so soon to 'trouble you with a line,' as a hangman once said to an unfortunate subject of his art, but I think it my duty to warn you of what you have to expect. Yesterday I sent off to you by express a basket of grapes at Sheffield. It contained samples of five American sorts—next year I hope to have more—and a few clusters from the cold vinery. Perhaps a trial of them will persuade you and the lady of your heart to come to Roslyn, in order to have a fuller experience of those you like best. After all, however, it seems to me that there is nothing in the way of grapes so delightful to the palate as the Muscats of the Old World. Come and see. There is a fair supply of European grapes in our cold vinery, and all around the cornice of our house the Isabellas are hanging 'as black as a thunder-cloud.' My wife is at this moment at West Point, but she is anxious for an excuse to come down to Roslyn. Mrs. Kirkland has lately returned from the West, and I will try to have her here also. I doubt whether she will be disposed to say nay if you will come. Come and sun yourselves awhile, like venerable snakes, here at Roslyn, before you turn into your den for the winter. The line gales have blown themselves out of breath, and the sun is hurrying off as fast as he can go toward the winter solstice; but in the mean time he is pouring out a flood of golden sunshine, that we prize all the more because, on account of the shortening days, we get less and less of it every twenty-four hours. The warm sunshine is never so sweet as when a frosty air stands in close neighborhood to it."

"ROSLYN, OCTOBER 5, 1863: ‡ I thank you for your letter, and all the kind expressions it contains. I am not certain that I had

* This refers to a poem called "Fifty Years." See "Poetical Works," vol. ii.

† To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

‡ To Thomas C. P. Hyde.

before heard from you since we parted at Williams College. I recollect you as held in esteem for your amiable qualities of character, but my memory preserves no image of your personal appearance. It gives me pleasure to know that you have been so usefully employed in the interval of more than half a century which has elapsed since I saw you. Dr. Alden, since I received your letter, has told me that you had two sons educated at the college where you went through your course of studies. For my own part, I have been what the world might call fortunate in life. I have been happily married, and my wife is spared to me. I have had two children; both are alive. I have been poor enough while poverty was best for me; I have now a competence at a time of life when it seems most desirable. My health is good—better of late years than formerly, and my activity of body scarcely diminished. I do not yet use spectacles, though next November I shall complete my sixty-ninth year. The world, for some reason, has always used me quite as well as I deserve. I hope I am not ungrateful for all these blessings to the Giver of them.

"The posthumous writings of Carlos Wilcox I have read; but until now I was not aware that to my old classmate the public was indebted for selecting and arranging them for publication. He was a young man of fine genius, and the task performed by you was a service to our literature. For the photographic likeness of yourself I thank you; and, though I may be charged with returning evil for good, I send my own. The beard I allowed to grow eleven years since, while travelling in Egypt and the Holy Land, and have never shaved it off."

"Roslyn, October 5, 1863:* Looking at your last a second time, it strikes me that you might, perhaps, expect that I should answer some part of it. Let me say, then, that we will give you a reasonable time to consider the question of coming to Roslyn—you and Mrs. Dewey—if you will only come at last, and before the days arrive described in the verses which you will find on the other leaf of this sheet. Mrs. Kirkland says she will come when you do.

"'The season wears an aspect glum and glummer;
The icy north wind, an unwelcome comer,

* To the Rev. Dr. Dewey.

Frighting from garden-walks each pretty hummer,
Whose murmuring music lulled the noons of summer,
Roars in the woods, with grummer voice and grummer,
And thunders in the forest like a drummer.
Dumb are the birds—they could not well be dumber;
The winter-cold, life's pitiless benumber,
Bursts water-pipes, and makes us call the plumber.
Now, by the fireside, toils the patient thumber
Of ancient books, and no less patient summer
Of long accounts, while topers fill the rummer,
The maiden thinks what furs will best become her,
And on the stage-boards shouts the gibing mummer.
Shut in by storms, the dull piano-strummer
Murders old tunes—there's nothing wearisomer.'

"[Observe the distinction made between *glum* and *grum*; *glum* applies to visible objects, and *grum* to sounds.]"

"RIO DE JANEIRO, OCTOBER 22d:* The two volumes of your poems, which I received from you last summer, I had the pleasure of putting into the hands of the Emperor of Brazil this morning. Your name and some of your works were already familiar to him, and for a long time he has had your likeness, and for some ten years the picture of your residence. He desires me to thank you for those volumes, and wishes you to know that he is ready to do all that is in his power for the advancement of human rights. He desires to see the day when Brazil (whose laws in regard to human rights, so far as the black man is concerned, have always been far in advance of yours) shall not have a single slave. He takes a deep interest in our struggle, and believes that the whole sentiment of Brazil, of planters as well as non-slaveholders, is against an institution which Portuguese cruelty and short-sightedness left as a heritage to Brazil, and which institution will perish in the mild process of law in a very few years, and, if the North is successful, in a much shorter period."†

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* From the Rev. J. C. Fletcher.

† Accompanying this letter was a photograph of the Emperor, sent by himself, which Mr. Bryant acknowledged as follows:

"GUILFORD, CONN., NOVEMBER 24, 1863:* I have had for many years the pleasure of a personal and pleasantly familiar acquaintance with the gentleman who desires me to address you this letter. Mr. T—— C—— C——, of Brooklyn, late the Speaker of your New York House of Representatives, with whose public, political, and party career I—whose position continues to be, as when first you and I became known to each other, that of an open, frank, outspeaking, and avowed monarchist, devoted to the godly government of the one, and detesting the ungodly government of the many—have, thank heaven, nothing to do. . . . Of the reasons for his anxious wish to be introduced to you, beyond the wish of all to whom your name is a household word, blended with their most cherished and classical recollections, I have not inquired. I simply present him to you as one of the brotherhood to whom you have for a lifetime so honorably belonged—that of the scholar and the gentleman—and begging you, when the opportunity is afforded you, to make an acquaintance with a similar character."

Mr. Bryant, as it has been said, found no fault with the Proclamation of Freedom, but he was dissatisfied with it in that it did not go far enough. He asked in his journal, and in speeches, for universal emancipation by an act of the Government. His earnestness, indeed, commanded the approval of Mr. Sumner, whose position was thought to be an extreme one on the subject. "Your words," Mr. Sumner wrote him, "for immediate emancipation have thrilled me; there is the true ring in them; and I doubt if ever the case has been stated

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"NEW YORK, *March* 27, 1865.

"*To H. I. M., the Emperor of Brazil:*

"YOUR MAJESTY: I have received, through the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, the photographic card bearing your Majesty's likeness, which you did me the honor to send me, and take this method of expressing my thanks. I am most happy to possess the likeness of one who to the highest power in the state unites a generous regard for the liberties of his people and a philanthropic desire for the greatest good of the greatest number. I have the honor to be

"Your Majesty's most obedient and obliged servant,

"W. C. BRYANT."

* From Fitz-Greene Halleck.

so strongly, and in so few words." This letter, which is without date, probably refers to a little address he made at a meeting in behalf of the loyalists of Missouri, who were calling upon the nation to protect them from the outrages of the rebels in that State, and it may be given as a specimen of his popular manner:

"This delegation visited Washington, as I understand, for the purpose of remonstrating with the President against the state of things which has lately filled both Missouri and Kansas with outrage and bloodshed. The conduct of affairs must be wrong when such things occur; for we know that there is power to put down the authors of them, and we claim that that power should be fully and remorselessly exercised. (Applause.) All these considerations have been laid, as I understand, before the President, who has promised to take them into his most careful consideration, and to do what is right. I hope we shall soon hear that these things have been remedied, and that the power has been committed to more vigorous and earnest hands. (Cheers.) Those men who now have control of public affairs in Missouri are, I understand, gradual emancipationists. Gradual emancipation! there is no grosser delusion ever entertained by man. (Great applause.) I speak not of the past; I speak of the present time. There have been good men, doubtless, who have yielded to the dream that gradual emancipation was the best method of getting rid of slavery, and some wise men have perhaps sanctioned that policy in time past, but the policy is now exploded. Our experience in North Carolina, our experience in Port Royal, and a larger and more decisive experience in Louisiana, have borne testimony against it; have shown that in instant emancipation there is no danger (applause); have shown that instant emancipation carries with it every advantage. I have read a letter this very day—a letter from a person whose name, if I were to mention it, would carry authority, assurance, acquiescence, conviction to all that should read it—in which he says all those negroes who have been made free, who are treated like freemen, paid wages, and allowed to provide for their families, now work better, more to the profit of those from whom they receive wages, and in all respects observe a more respectful deportment than ever before. He goes on to say that all the planters say this, and that, if things were rightly

managed in Louisiana, within a year that State would take her place among the free States of the Union, with the entire consent of all who dwell within her limits. He goes further than this; he says that all over the South, in every part of the slave States, the change, the transition from absolute and universal slavery to universal and instantaneous emancipation, might take place with even less of violence and confusion than a tax law could be changed in a Northern State. (Applause.) Such is his testimony — a most valuable testimony. Gradual emancipation! Have we not suffered mischief enough from slavery without keeping it any longer? Has not blood enough been shed? My friends, if a child of yours were to fall in the fire, would you pull him out gradually? (Laughter.) If he were to swallow a dose of laudanum sufficient to cause speedy death, and a stomach-pump were at hand, would you draw the poison out by degrees? If your house were on fire, would you put it out piecemeal? (Laughter.) And yet there are men who talk of gradual emancipation by force of ancient habit, and there are men in the slave States who make of slavery a sort of idol which they are unwilling to part with; which, if it must be removed, they would prefer to see removed after a lapse of time and tender leave-takings. Slavery is a foul and monstrous idol, a Juggernaut under which thousands are crushed to death; it is a Moloch for whom the children of the land pass through fire. Must we consent that the number of the victims shall be gradually diminished? If there are a thousand victims this year, are you willing that nine hundred should be sacrificed next year, and eight hundred the next, and so on until after the lapse of ten years it shall cease? No, my friends, let us hurl this grim image from its pedestal. Down with it to the ground. (Cheers.) Dash it to fragments; trample it in the dust. (Applause.) Grind it to powder, as the prophets of old commanded that the graven images of the Hebrew idolaters should be ground, and in that state scatter it to the four winds, and strew it upon the waters, that no human hand shall ever again gather up the accursed atoms and mould them into an image to be worshipped again with human sacrifices." (Loud and prolonged applause.)

The speaker was the more earnest in his demands for freedom because the temporary success of our arms in the re-

pulse of Lee had raised a clamor for peace. It is a good time now, it was said, to bring about an accommodation. The air was full of schemes for an amicable adjustment of diffiuclties. More than one body of commissioners got together, in various informal ways, to consult on the conditions of reconciliation. Mr. Lincoln himself, with that large-minded charity which characterized him, was not averse to negotiations, and encouraged them, when he could do so, without an implication of sacrificing his own dignity or the purposes of the war.

Mr. Bryant yearned for peace as ardently as any one, as those tender little poems, meditated at this time—"The Return of the Birds" and "My Autumn Walk"—evince; but he was utterly opposed to any peace which did not bring with it the ultimate peace of general freedom. "There is but one way of ending the war," he wrote day after day. "Blow upon blow, battle after battle, conquest upon conquest, the capture of all the rebel seaports, the occupation of all the rivers in the rebel territory, no delay, no pause in the course of victory, till every one of their strongholds, and every one of their towns, from Manassas to Fort Pickens, and from the Potomac to the Sabine, is ours. Then, when we have subdued the insurrection, we will make our own terms—terms such as shall seem to us just and fair, and so devised as best to avoid the danger of a future insurrection of the class who have caused all this strife and bloodshed." His argument was this:

"A peace purchased by receding from the policy of emancipation will be but a hollow truce, in the womb of which would lurk other insurrections and rebellions, ready to break out in civil war whenever an occasion like that of 1861 should arise. Suffer the rebel States to return to the Union with the right of slavery acknowledged, and you proclaim to them that they can at any time rebel at their good pleasure, and, if unsuccessful in their revolt, take their old place in the Union until a more auspicious moment shall arrive for forming a new confederacy. You restore to their old station a class of men whose sole occupations are politics and the use of fire-arms and the lash; a rest-

less, ambitious, overbearing, arbitrary class, with whom we have never lived in harmony except by submitting to their will, and with whom we can never live in peace hereafter, except by new submissions—a class of men bent on embroiling our country with foreign nations, except when a quarrel with a foreign government might bring the institution of slavery into danger. By continuing the slave-holding class in existence, we shall keep alive the vexed question of slavery, the curse of our politics, the cause of infinite national disgrace, the source of indescribable barbarities, the occasion of this dreadful Civil War with all its calamities and all its crimes. By adhering to the policy of the proclamation we blot out this fierce controversy forever, and put in its place eternal peace. On questions of expenditure, of trade, of internal improvements, of foreign policy, we may differ, we may dispute, we may form parties; but on this great, gloomy, fearful question, which, after years of stormy discussion, has been submitted to the frightful arbitrament of war, we shall have perpetual silence. We shall then be a homogeneous people—a people with the same interests and institutions as well as origin, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from our northernmost to our southernmost limit. Our parties will no longer be local and geographical, but, as in other countries, formed upon differences of opinion as to the proper province and powers of legislation." *

But, ardent as he was for the vigorous prosecution of the war, there was one thing he would never tolerate—the usurpation of civil power by the military authorities. The Constitution and the laws govern, he said, in time of war as in time of peace, and so long as the tribunals of justice are open there is no need of resort to the strong arm. Whenever it was proposed, as it was on several occasions, to arrest editors of newspapers because their comments on public affairs were not pleasing to the Government, or to thrust citizens into prison for alleged utterances of treason, he rebuked the intention with the utmost severity. He asserted for himself the right to arraign the acts of the Government when they seemed to him

* "Evening Post," July, 1863.

wrong, and he was unwilling that the right should be fettered or punished in others. He saw that an assumption of power, under the plea of military necessity, would soon lead to the grossest acts of oppression, and he opposed it, in every instance, with a vigor that had its effects in restraining the tendency to its exercise.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHTH.

THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

A. D. 1864.

THE little volume of "Thirty Poems," some two hundred pages only, containing three of the longest pieces the author had ever written—"Sella," "The Little People of the Snow," and the "Fifth Book of the Odyssey," and four at least of the most beautiful, "The Rain Dream," "A Day Dream," "The Constellations," and "The Future Life"—was received with general favor by his friends and the public. What some of his friends thought of it may be seen in the following letters:

"CAMBRIDGE, JANUARY 4th:* I was much gratified to receive on New Year's day your kind remembrance in your new volume of poems, which I have read with great sympathy and delight, and find very consoling both in its music and in its meaning. I most heartily congratulate you on this new success. Have you looked at the January number of the 'North American Review,' the first under the new management? Some of the articles, I think, will please you, particularly 'Immorality in Politics,' by Mr. Norton, and 'The President's Policy,' by Mr. Lowell."

"WAYLAND, JANUARY 8th:† Your cordial note, so kind and so poetic, made me very happy. I have pasted it in my own copy of

* From H. W. Longfellow, Esq.

† From Mrs. Lydia Maria Child.

'Looking toward Sunset,' that I may have the pleasure of seeing it every time I open the volume. It was followed by your 'Thirty Poems,' which I value extremely, both for their own beauty and excellence, and as a souvenir of one whom I greatly honor and admire. I had previously read and enjoyed several of the poems. I am very little given to envy, but I had a feeling very near akin to it when I read your 'Robert of Lincoln.' It is so bird-like, so charming in its simplicity and its rollicking life! Just what Bob himself would sing if he could only find a publisher. Nay, I am inclined to think he *does* sing it, and you were his inspired interpreter. I have your volume containing 'The Ages,' and other poems, which you had the kindness to send me in 1832. I re-read them every once in a while, and they always have a fresh charm. Your 'Forest Hymn' I have in another and very elegant form, with exquisitely beautiful illustrations by J. A. H. A friend sent it to me on my birthday, four years ago; and, when my birthdays recur, I always bring it out with other similar treasures and look lovingly over it. It makes an impression upon me like the silent grandeur of the forest, whose lofty majesty is decorated with so many little jewels and fringes of beauty. While I am reading that 'Hymn' I always seem to hear one of Mendelssohn's 'Songs without Words,' which I took a fancy to call 'The Druid's Hymn,' because it always seemed to me to be sung by a devout soul in the depths of stately groves. It is the third song in his second set of songs. Perhaps it would say quite another thing to *you;* but *I* think the music came from the same source as your 'Forest Hymn.' I mean to ask if it isn't so when I arrive at that region of archetypes which Plato calls 'the intelligible world.' I cannot sufficiently thank you for being such a benefactor to my soul; still less can I thank you sufficiently for all you have done to advance free principles."

"Boston, January 26th:* I received the 'Thirty Poems,' and I cannot express to you how much I thank you for the pleasing consciousness of subsidence into a perfect calm which it brought upon me. It is pervaded throughout by a beautiful spirit—a semi-angelic creature; partaker in a higher world, and yet sharer in enough of this to love all beautiful and harmless earthly things. How exquisitely play-

* From Richard H. Dana, Esq.

ful is 'The Wind and Stream'! the wind so humanly affectionate when

> 'He put the o'erhanging grasses by,
> And softly stooped to kiss the stream—
> The pretty stream, the flattered stream,
> The shy, yet unexpectant stream,'

so maidenly. And grandly and mystically mournful and cast out is that 'Wind of Night'—'a lonely wanderer.' It is of a rare quality. Edmund is mightily pleased with the purity of the language and the freedom from all appearances of effort or of straining after something. But enough! No, I must just name the quaint old apple-tree. I could see myself in the distance, in our old orchard, sitting with a pumpkin sweeting which my little hands would but half grasp, and eating into it, with my cheeks all wet and daubed with its juice. Nice, innocent little boy, who, left to grow older, has eaten too much of that *other apple* since then."

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 29th:* Let me take the present opportunity of thanking you for the 'Thirty Poems' you were so kind as to write, in the first place, and, secondly, to send to me. Most of them are new to me, and carry with them, besides their grace and tenderness, the pleasure of a surprise. 'The Planting of the Apple-Tree' you may be sure touches me nearly. It brings summer days, and winter starlight, and all that can make out-o'-doors charming, wherever it goes. Although my verbal memory is nearly gone, I believe I shall succeed in learning that by heart. And the wholly domestic poems are so full of sweetness that I cannot forget them either. It seems to me that those are, after all, the songs by which posterity will best know you, although you have written comparatively few of them. 'The Song of the Sower' is a splendid poem, and must last with our language, unless the plough should forget to 'feed the expectant nations' through the abominable invention by somebody of a method of making bread of anthracite coal! I love the movement of the measure in 'The Third of November, 1861,' an unusual one for you. It is like the graceful mazourka, the best emphasized of all our imported

* From Mrs. C. M. Kirkland.

dances; and seems particularly adapted to the tone of rich, mild, lingering autumn weather. I have not yet read the longer poems. I come slowly to them; but I thank you for all, and I rejoice that you still enjoy the mellow inward sunshine which brings such fruits to perfection. It spreads a glow on all around and about you, and places your 'gentle one' in an aureole that well becomes her. And what an inheritance for your children! But excuse my trying to express the inexpressible."

"WOODBURNE, APRIL 30th:* To shield myself from the suspicion that my faculties are quite gone, I have intended, from day to day since I last wrote to you, to write again, to say that, after a second reading of 'The Little People of the Snow,' I was so charmed as to be thoroughly mortified lest my remarks upon it should appear stupid to you, and wholly unworthy of its beauties. For my own sake, and not at all for yours, I must trouble you with the assurance that your jewels were not thrown away upon me. My 'blue and gold' book, with its thirty pieces (why did you not make them thirty-one, and not that impious thirty?), is always beside me, whether I sit by my table, am lying on my bed of weakness, or on my couch on the piazza, watching the unfolding of the glorious spring, listening to its poetic breathings, in such exact harmony with yours, which you, master as you are of nature's language, so beautifully interpret, or illustrate in your illumined pages. Forgive me; I meant to have said this to dear Mrs. Bryant, and not to have troubled you—only to thank you for what is my daily solace."

"NEW YORK, APRIL 22d:† I have been making myself my own executor, in part, at least, and am paying off by anticipation, while I have the means, some little legacies to my relatives and those of my wife. As I have a few notes of yours, it has appeared to me that I might as well send some of them to you as send the money. It will, at least, stop the interest. Enclosed you have two of the smaller notes, which, with the interest due on them, will amount to about a thousand dollars. I hope you will make no difficulty about accepting them, as it will save me the trouble of giving them to you in my will.

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* From Miss C. M. Sedgwick. † W. C. Bryant to John H. Bryant.

You see that I have cancelled the name in each of them, so that they cannot be good for anything to me or anybody else. The attention which you have for so many years given to my affairs in Illinois deserves some acknowledgment." *

"ROSLYN, JULY 12th: † Your letter did not reach me until the event to which it alluded as probably near had actually taken place.‡ I was about to call it a sad event, but it is so only in a limited sense; sad to those who survive and who shall see his venerable form and hear his wise and kindly words no more; but otherwise no more sad than the close of a well-spent day, or the satisfactory completion of any task which has long occupied our attention. Mr. Quincy, in laying aside the dull weeds of mortality, has with them put off old age with all its infirmities, and, passing to a nobler stage of existence, enters again upon the activity of youth with more exalted powers and more perfect organs. § Instead of lamenting his departure at a time of life considerably beyond the common age of man, the generation which now inhabits the earth should give thanks that he has lived so long and should speak of the blessing of being allowed for so many years to have before them such an illustrious example.

"I hope that Mrs. Waterston bears the loss with Christian resignation, as an event in the order of nature, yet mercifully postponed for many years."

"ROSLYN, JULY 20th: ‖ I am glad, and so is Frances, to see that your feelings are with our country in this calamitous war. You have seen, I suppose, enough to convince you that our Government and people are resolved that it shall end in but one way—the absolute

* I copy this letter because it reveals a practice which Mr. Bryant had adopted ever since the prosperity of his journal enabled him to be helpful to others. He would lend his less well-to-do relatives, and those of his wife, any little money that he had to spare, taking a mortgage or a note for the value; but, if he found that they were persons of enterprise and thrift, he would surprise them some day by returning the securities as gifts. Of this, however, he said nothing, and I am indebted to his papers for my knowledge of the fact.

† To the Rev. R. C. Waterston.

‡ The death of Josiah Quincy, who departed in the ninety-second year of his age.

§ See "The Return of Youth." Poetical Works, vol. i., p. 313.

‖ To Mrs. Charlotte Field, of England.

submission of those who are in arms against them. We think we see this conclusion of the war at no very great distance. The news of our country, when circulated in England, is, in many instances, much discolored by passing through unfriendly channels. One of the worst consequences of this distortion of facts, and of the hostile comments so often made by your press upon almost every event of our war, is a growing animosity toward Great Britain. Some of us take great pains to distinguish the British nation, so far as relates to this matter, from the British government, and the British aristocracy from the British people; but it is not the great majority of newspaper readers who will attend to these distinctions.

"Meanwhile, we are here at Roslyn, in a place where we know little of the war save by rumor, and where the world goes on, or almost stands still, just as it did when you were last here. Birds sing, and the cicada sounds his shrill note from the neighboring tree, and grapes swell, and pears ripen, just as they did then, and children are born, and old people and the sick die in their beds, just as if there were no war. I wish you were here a little while to see how peaceful the place is, and how much pleasanter we have made it, and to join in our prayers that every part of our country may soon be as tranquil."

"ROSLYN, AUGUST 18th:* I wish I could write you a letter as bright and beautiful as this morning, and as full of freshness and life. A long and severe drought, in which all the vegetable world drooped and languished, has just closed, and the earth has been moistened with abundant showers. For a sultry atmosphere, a blood-red sun, and a sky filled with smoke from our great forests on fire, we have a golden sunshine flowing down through a transparent air, and a grateful breeze from the cool chambers of the northwest. Our usual fruits, meantime, with the exception of the raspberry, have not failed us; we have plenty of excellent pears, and I have just come in from gathering melons in the garden. This afternoon the school-children of the neighborhood are to have their annual feast of cake and pears on the green under the trees by my house, and I am glad they are to have so fine a day for it.

* To Miss Christiana Gibson, of Edinburgh.

"Julia has told you where the mistress of the mansion is at present—in a place where, for her at least,

'—good digestion waits on appetite,'

and some measure of health on both. In September I hope to have her back again, looking and feeling 'amaist as weel's the new.' From the place where she has already passed several weeks—a sandy vale lying in the lap of the grand Adirondack Mountains, about ten miles west of Lake Champlain—she is seized with an adventurous desire to push her explorations to Saranac and its sister lakes—very picturesque, it is said—and this she will do, I suppose, next week. I do not go, for I am not a gregarious animal. I cannot travel, like the locusts, in clouds, at least with any degree of contentment. Yet, as my wife makes no objection, and reports her health improved, I encourage her to proceed. Meanwhile, I employ myself in reading Taine on 'La Littérature Anglaise." M. Taine has studied English literature thoroughly and carefully, and is almost always brilliant, but sometimes too elaborately so. He looks at everything through French spectacles, but his book is none the worse for that. He often exaggerates, but I have been much interested in his work. Look at it if it comes in your way.

"How this dreadful Civil War lingers! We are now also making wry faces over the bitter fruits of that great folly against which I protested so vehemently, and almost alone as a conductor of the Republican press—of making paper a legal tender."

"ROSLYN, OCTOBER 13th:* I send you a poem for the 'Atlantic Monthly.' Ask me for no more verses. A septuagenarian has passed the time when it is becoming for him to occupy himself with

'The rhymes and rattles of the man and boy.'

Pope was twenty years younger than I am when he said to Bolingbroke:

'Why wilt thou break the Sabbath of my days?'

and

'Public too long; ah, let me hide my age.'

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* To James T. Fields, of Boston.

"Uhland, who died in his seventy-sixth year, did not, in the last twenty years of his life—or twenty-four, was it?—add a hundred lines to his published verses. Nobody, in the years after seventy, can produce anything in poetry save the thick and muddy last runnings of the cask from which all the clear and sprightly liquor has been already drawn. I can think of no name for the trifle I send you. Can you suggest one? If not, I must leave the name to be added in the proof Please leave the date as it stands at the close of the poem." *

"New York, December 26th: † I give you many thanks for the charming book you have sent me, 'Looking toward Sunset.' My wife and I have read it with great delight. You are like some artists who excel in painting sunset views. You give the closing stage of human life an atmosphere of the richest light and the warmest hues, and make its clouds add to its glory."

The letters of personal compliment I have introduced show how highly and tenderly Mr. Bryant was regarded by his more intimate acquaintances, but they do not show the changes in respect to him which had been going on for some years in public sentiment. These were remarkable. Statesmen and politicians, who a little while before had denounced him and his journal with great acerbity, were now glad to acknowledge that he had been right in his views of public duty and they wrong. He was beginning, too, to be very widely honored and reverenced by all classes of people, and his newspaper, which had struggled so long to maintain itself against adverse opinions, was become a favorite. Its circulation and advertisements had gradually increased, until, at the outbreak of the war, its income for a year was a considerable fortune. This increase of prosperity, however, had no effect upon Mr. Bryant's modes of living; yet he prized it because it furnished him with additional means for his charities, which were always large, and sometimes not entirely

* It is printed as "My Autumn Walk." See Poetical Works, vol. ii., p. 146.

† To Mrs. L. M. Child.

judicious, and for the cultivation of his garden and farm. His delight in the latter was so great that it is doubtful whether any shrub or tree, fit for planting in the soil of Long Island, of which he happened to hear, escaped his experiments. If a desirable flower or fruit was mentioned to him, he sent for it, not only to Michigan and California, but to Australia and Japan; and, when he had received the precious exotic, he watched over it with the care and attention of a parent over a child.

It was an evidence of the affection in which he was held that, on the recurrence of his birthday (November 3d), when he had reached the scriptural threescore years and ten, there was scarcely a journal in the country, of any party, which did not make it a subject of friendly remark. He was spoken of as both a patriarch among poets and a Nestor among newspaper men. His fellows of the Century Club, of which he had been one of the founders, resolved to make it the occasion of a festival, in which all the literary men and artists of the nation should be invited to join. It took place on the evening of November 5th (the third falling upon Saturday), and was one of the most beautiful tributes ever paid to a public man. Invitations to participate in it had been sent to prominent men in various parts of the country, which, although the loud sounds of war were heard on all sides, and a Presidential election canvass was in progress, met with a wide and cordial response. As the company, consisting of four or five hundred ladies and gentlemen, entered the main room of the club-house, they found it decorated with festoons of flowers and evergreens, and with pictures, wholly the work of the artists of the club, illustrating for the most part passages from the works of the guest. As soon as they were assembled, Mr. Bancroft, the President of the club, addressed Mr. Byrant in a few words, explanatory of the objects of the meeting. "It is primarily," he said, "your career as a poet that we celebrate. While the mountains and the ocean-side ring with the tramp of cavalry and the din of cannon, we take a res-

pite in the serene regions of ideal pursuits." He then spoke of Mr. Bryant's love of nature, of his strong nationality, and of his personal life, which had been "one continuous record of patriotism and integrity." Mr. Bryant's reply was modest and appropriate, questioning rather humorously the propriety of congratulating a man on having reached an age when the bodily and mental powers are apt to decline, but paying the highest compliments to his fellow-poets, both present and absent:

"I miss my old friend Dana," he said, "who gave so grandly the story of the 'Buccaneer' in his solemn verses. I miss Pierpont, venerable in years, yet vigorous in mind and body, and with an undimmed fancy; and him whose pages are wet with the tears of maidens who read the story of 'Evangeline'; and the author of 'Fanny' and the 'Croakers,' no less renowned for the fiery spirit which animated his 'Marco Bozzaris'; and him to whose wit we owe the 'Biglow Papers,' who made a lowly flower of the wayside as classical as the rose of Anacreon; and the Quaker poet, whose verses, Quaker as he is, stir the blood like the voice of a trumpet calling to battle; and the poetess of Hartford, whose beautiful lyrics are in a million hands; and others, whose names, were they to occur to me here as in my study, I might accompany with the mention of some characteristic merit. But here is he whose aërial verse has raised the little insect of our fields, making his murmuring journey from flower to flower, the humble-bee, to a dignity equal to that of Pindar's eagle; here is the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast-table,' author of that most spirited of naval lyrics, beginning with the line,

'Aye, tear her tattered ensign down!'

Here, too, is the poet who told in pathetic verse the story of Jephthah's daughter; and here are others, worthy compeers of those I have mentioned, yet greatly my juniors, in the brightness of whose rising fame I am like one who has carried a lantern in the night, and who perceives that its beams are no longer visible in the glory which the morning pours around him."*

* The whole of his address is given in "Orations and Addresses." D. Appleton & Co., New York.

At the close of this reply, a band of choristers in the gallery sang an ode, written by Bayard Taylor, and set to music by Louis Long, the artist, with fine effect. Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had come from Boston on purpose to attend the festival, then spoke in his characteristic conversational way, but to the delight of his hearers. He said, among other things:

"While I am grateful to you and the 'Century' for the privilege of joining you in this graceful and most deserved homage to our poet, I am a little disconcerted, in the absence of some expected friends from the Bay State, at finding myself put forward to speak on their part. Let me say for them that we have a property in his genius and virtue. While we delight in your love of him and in his power and reputation in your imperial State, we can never forget that he was born on the soil of Massachusetts. Your great metropolis is always, by some immense attraction of gravity, drawing to itself our best men. But we forgive you in this case the robbery, when we see how nobly you have used him. Moreover, the joint possession by New York and Massachusetts of him, and of others in this great circle of his friends, is one of those ethereal hoops which binds these States inseparably in the perilous times.

"I join with all my heart in your wish to honor this native, sincere, original, patriotic poet. I say original; I have heard him charged with being of a certain school. I heard it with surprise, and asked, What school? for he never reminded me of Goldsmith, or Wordsworth, or Byron, or Moore. I found him always original—a true painter of the face of this country, and of the sentiment of his own people. When I read the verses of popular American and English poets, I often think that they appear to have gone into the art galleries and to have seen pictures of mountains, but this man to have seen mountains. With his stout staff he has climbed Greylock and the White Hills, and sung what he saw. He renders Berkshire to me in verse, with the sober coloring, too, to which nature cleaves, only now and then permitting herself the scarlet and gold of the prism. It is his proper praise that he first, and he only, made known to mankind our northern landscape—its summer splendor, its autumn russet, its winter lights and glooms. And he is original because he is sincere.

Many young men write verse which strikes by talent, but the writer has not committed himself, the man is not there; it is written at arm's length. He could as well have written on any other theme; it was not necessitated and autobiographic, and therefore it does not imprint itself on the memory, and return for thought and consolation in our solitary hours. But our friend's inspiration is from the inmost mind; he has not a labial but a chest voice, and you shall detect the tastes and experiences of the poem in his daily life.

"Like other poets—more than other poets—with his expanding genius his ambition grew. Fountain-heads and pathless groves did not content him. It is a national sin. There is, you know, an optical distemper endemic in the city of Washington, contracted by senators and others who once look at the President's chair; their eyes grow to it; they can never again take their eyes off it. The virus once in is not to be got out of the system. Our friend had not this malady, but has symptoms of another—

"'That latent infirmity of noble minds.'

Ah, gentlemen! so cold and majestic as he sits here, I fear this sin burned at his heart—well hid, I own; never was man more modest, less boastful, less egotistical. But you remember that wicked Phidias, who, after making his divine Minerva, carved his own image with such deep incision into the shield that it could not be effaced without destroying the statue. But this artist of ours, with deeper cunning, has contrived to levy on all American nature, has subsidized every solitary grove and monument-mountain in Berkshire or the Catskills, every gleaming water, the 'gardens of the desert,' every water-fowl and wood-bird, the evening wind, the stormy March, the song of the stars—has suborned every one of these to speak for him, so that there is no feature of day or night in the country which does not, to a contemplative mind, recall the name of Bryant. This high-handed usurpation of whatever is sweet or sublime I charge him with, and, on the top of this, with the sorcery of making us hug our fetters and rejoice in our subjugation.

"Then, sir, for his patriotism—we all know the deep debt which the country owes to the accomplished journalist who, the better to carry the ends which his heart desired, left the studies and retirements dear to his Muse, adapted his voice to the masses to be reached, and

the great cause to be sustained, was content to drop "the garland and singing-notes of the poet,' and, making his Tyrtean elegies in the plain speech of the street, sounded the key-note of policy and public duty to the American people in a manner and with an effect of the highest service to the republic.

"Before I sit down, let me apply to him a verse addressed by Thomas Moore to the poet Crabbe, and Moore has written few better:

> "'True bard, and simple as the race
> Of heaven-born poets always are,
> When stooping from their starry place
> They're children near, but gods afar.'"

Poems were then read by Oliver Wendell Holmes, George H. Boker, Richard H. Stoddard, and Julia Ward Howe;* and others were received from John Greenleaf Whittier, Alfred B. Street, H. T. Tuckerman, Mrs. Sigourney, H. N. Powers, of Illinois; Mary C. Booth, of Wisconsin; and Charles Langster, of Canada. Letters of regret at not being able to be present were read from Richard H. Dana, Edward Everett, H. W. Longfellow, John Pierpont, G. C. Verplanck, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Charles Sprague, Charles T. Brooks, Miss Sedgwick, Goldwin Smith, Dr. Muhlenberg, Dr. Walker, late President of the University at Cambridge; Dr. Allen, formerly President of Bowdoin College; Bishop Coxe, of Western New York, and many others. Mr. James Russell Lowell expected to be present, but was detained by the death of an intimate relative on the battle-field, and sent instead a spirited ode, entitled "On Board the Seventy-six," of which I cannot refrain from quoting a few stanzas:

> "Our ship lay trembling in an angry sea,
> Her rudder gone, her mainmast o'er the side;
> Her scuppers, from the waves' clutch staggering free,
> Trailed threads of priceless crimson through the tide;

* As these poems are to be found in the printed works of their respective authors, they are not reproduced here.

Sails, shrouds, and spars with hostile cannon torn,
We lay, awaiting morn.

. . . . . .

"Some, faintly loyal, felt their pulses lag
With the slow beat that doubts and then despairs;
Some, caitiffs, would have struck the starry flag
That knits us with the past, and makes us heirs
Of deeds high-hearted as were ever done
'Neath the all-seeing sun.

"But One there was, the Singer of our crew,
Upon whose head age waved his peaceful sign,
But whose red heart's-blood no surrender knew;
And, couchant under brows of massive line,
The eyes, like guns beneath a parapet,
Watched charged with lightnings yet.

"The voices of the hills did his obey;
The torrents flashed and tumbled in his song;
He brought our native fields from far away,
Or set us mid the innumerable throng
Of dateless woods, or where we heard the calm
Old homestead's evening psalm.

"But now he sang of faith to things unseen,
Of freedom's birthright given to us in trust,
And words of doughty cheer he spoke between,
That made all earthly fortune seem as dust,
Matched with that duty, old as time and new,
Of being brave and true.

"We, listening, learned what makes the might of words—
Manhood to back them, constant as a star;
His voice rammed home our cannon, edged our swords,
And sent our boarders shouting; shroud and spar
Heard him and stiffened; the sails heard and wooed
The winds with loftier mood.

"In our dark hour he manned our guns again;
Remanned ourselves from his own manhood's store;
Pride, honor, country throbbed through all his strain;
And shall we praise? God's praise was his before;
And on our futile laurels he looks down,
Himself our bravest crown."

After the more formal ceremonies, pleasant addresses were made in the supper-room by William M. Evarts, Richard H. Dana, Jr., and Dr. Osgood. But, perhaps, the most agreeable incident of the evening was the presentation to Mr. Bryant of a portfolio of nearly fifty pictures painted by as many of the most eminent artists of the nation — among them Durand, Kensett, Eastman Johnson, Church, Gifford, Gray, Colman, Lafarge, Leutze, Hennessey, J. G. Brown, Bierstadt, McEntee, and Hicks. The President of the Academy of Design, in making the presentation, said: "Of the vast multitudes who with ever-growing delight bend over your pages, there are none whose hearts glow with deeper joy and pride than those of the artists," "who, for many years, by mountain and stream, and in the stillness of the studio, have been cheered by your vivid pictures of American scenery and inspired by your songs of human freedom." Mr. Bryant replied that "among the artists of our country are some of my oldest and best friends. In their conversation I have taken great delight, and derived from it much instruction. In them the love and study of nature tend to preserve the native simplicity of character, to make them frank and ingenuous, and to divert their attention from selfish interests. I shall prize this gift, therefore, not only as a memorial of the genius of our artists, but also as a token of the good-will of a class of men for whom I cherish a particular regard and esteem." The pictures afterward, properly framed, graced and still grace the walls of the poet's home in the country.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINTH.

THE CLOSE OF THE WAR.

A. D. 1865.

MR. BRYANT opened the year 1865 with a letter "To the Union Army," written at the request of a friend, which is so full an account of the progress of public events that it furnishes all the general history that is needed here.

"SOLDIERS OF THE UNION ARMY: I have been desired by the conductor of the "Soldiers' Friend" to address a few words to you at the opening of a new year. I take the occasion to offer you my warmest congratulations on what you have accomplished in the past year, and what you may expect to accomplish in the year before you.

"At the beginning of the year 1864 the rebel generals presented a formidable front to our armies. Lee, at the head of a powerful force, occupied the banks of the Rapidan and the Rappahannock, threatening Washington and Pennsylvania. Early and his rebel cavalry held the wide valley of the Shenandoah. Johnston, with a formidable army, had posted himself at Atlanta, deemed an impregnable position, in which the rebels had stored the munitions of war in vast magazines, and collected the machinery by which they were fabricated.

"A glance at the history of the past year will show you how all this state of things has been rapidly changed.

"It will show General Grant transferred from the West, and invested with the command of our armies, pressing Lee by a series of splendid and hotly contested victories southward to Richmond, where Grant now holds the first general of the rebel army and its choicest troops unwilling prisoners.

"It will show General Sheridan sweeping down the valley of the

Shenandoah, and, by a series of brilliant successes, driving Early from the field.

"It will show General Sherman leaving his position in Tennessee, and, by a series of able movements, reaching Atlanta, flanking and defeating Hood, capturing Atlanta, giving that stronghold of rebellion to the flames, and then making a triumphant march of three hundred miles through the heart of Georgia down to Savannah, which yields at the first summons, while the troops which held it save themselves from capture by flight.

"It will show General Thomas, left in Tennessee by Sherman to deal with Hood, luring that commander from his advantageous position, and then falling upon his troops with an impetuosity which they cannot resist, till, by defeat after defeat, his broken and diminished army has become a mere band of fugitives.

"It will show Mobile Bay entered by our navy, under the gallant Farragut, and held by him until the Federal troops shall be ready to occupy the town from the land side. It will show Wilmington, that principal mart of the blockade-runners, menaced both by sea and land, and Charleston trembling lest her fate may be like that of Savannah.

"The year closes in these events, which, important as they are in themselves, are no less important in the consequences to which they lead, and which, as the ports of the enemy fall into our hands, as their resources one by one are cut off, their communications broken, and their armies lessened by defeat and desertion, promise the early disorganization of the rebellion, a speedy end of all formidable resistance to the authority of the Government, and the abandonment of the schemes formed by the rebel leaders, in utter despair of their ability to execute them.

"Soldiers! This is your work! These are your heroic achievements; for these a grateful country gives you its thanks. Millions of hearts beat with love and pride when you are named. Millions of tongues speak your praise and offer up prayers for your welfare. Millions of hands are doing and giving all they can for your comfort, and that of the dear ones whom you have left at your homes. The history of the present war will be the history of your courage, your constancy, and the cheerful sacrifices you have made to the cause of your country.

"I feel that you need no exhortation to persevere as you have begun. If I did, I would say to the men at the front: Be strong; be hopeful! your crowning triumph cannot be far distant. When it arrives, our nation will have wiped out a dark stain, which we feared it might yet wear for ages, and will stand in the sight of the world a noble commonwealth of freemen, bound together by ties which will last as long as the common sympathies of our race.

"To those who suffer in our hospitals, the wounded and maimed in the war, I would say: The whole nation suffers with you; the whole nation implores Heaven for your relief and solace. A grateful nation will not, cannot, forget you.

"The nation has voted to stand by you who have fought or are fighting its battles. This great Christian nation has signified to the Government its will that the cause, in which you have so generously suffered and bled, shall never be abandoned, but shall be resolutely maintained until the hour of its complete triumph. Meantime, the salutation of the new year, which I offer you, comes from millions of hearts as well as from mine, mingled in many of them with prayers for your protection in future conflicts, and thanksgiving for your success in those which are past. May you soon witness the glorious advent of that happy new year, when our beloved land, having seen the end of this cruel strife, shall present to the world a union of States with homogeneous institutions, founded on universal freedom, dwelling together in peace and unbroken amity, and when you who have fought so well, and triumphed so gloriously, shall return to your homes, amid the acclamations of your countrymen, wiser and more enlightened, and not less virtuous than when you took up arms for your country, with not one vice of the camp to cause regret to your friends.

WILLIAM C. BRYANT.

"*January* 1, 1865."

The "crowning triumph" was, as we shall see, not far distant.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bryant was pushing a petition to Congress for the passage of a law abolishing slavery throughout the United States, and he endeavored to enlist the powerful aid of Mr. Edward Everett in his cause. But Mr. Everett saw objections to the mode of action proposed, which he presented

in the following letter, and which seem to have had sufficient force with Mr. Bryant, who was always strongly opposed to centralized action, to deter him from prosecuting his plan. At any rate there is no further allusion to it, and he satisfied himself with urging, through his journal, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which required the separate action of the States, and was the better way.

"BOSTON, JANUARY 4th: I have this day received your favor of the 2d, with an enclosed printed paper, to which my signature is requested, to be 'immediately' returned. I should have preferred a little time for reflection on a proposal of so much gravity, and it would be presumptuous in me to decide off-hand that a law might not by *possibility* be framed in the present state of the country by which slavery should be constitutionally prohibited by Congress. I must own, however, that I do not find in the Constitution (from which alone Congress derives not only its powers but its existence) any authority for such a purpose. If this view is correct (and I am not aware that it has ever been contested by any party), the passage of a law like that proposed would be the inauguration of a new revolution; that is, the assumption of powers of the widest scope, confessedly not conferred by the frame of government under which we live. The legislation to which General Washington referred, in his letter of 1786, quoted in the printed paper, was, of course, State legislation. So was that of Pennsylvania, so justly commended in the paper. I would fear that an attempt like that prayed for would not only render more difficult the adoption of the constitutional amendment now pending, but throw obstacles in the way of the prohibition of slavery now in rapid progress under State authority, with reference to which there is no doubt." *

He was employed at the time also in getting up a subscription for the purchase of Allston's portrait by Leslie, to be pre-

* This letter was among the last Mr. Everett wrote; eleven days after the date of it he died; and Mr. Bryant, though he had been no admirer of his earlier political course, paid handsome tributes to his memory in speeches before the New York Historical Society and the Union League Club. (*a*)

(*a*) See "Orations and Addresses." D. Appleton & Co.

sented to the Academy of Design, but was fortunately saved his labor by the following generous letter from his friend Samuel F. B. Morse, which ought to be preserved:

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 4, 1865: I have this moment received your printed circular respecting the purposed purchase of the portrait of Allston, by Leslie, to be presented to the National Academy of Design. There are associations in my mind with those two eminent and beloved names which appeal too strongly to me to be resisted. Now, I have a favor to ask which I hope will not be denied. It is that I may be allowed to present to the Academy that portrait in my own name. You can appreciate the arguments which have influenced my wishes in this respect. 'Allston was more than any other person my master in art. Leslie was my life-long cherished friend and fellow-pupil, whom I loved as a brother: we all lived together for years in the closest intimacy and in the same house. Is there not, then, a fitness that the portrait of the master by one distinguished pupil should be presented by the surviving pupil to the Academy over which he presided in its infancy, as well as assisted in its birth, and, although divorced from art, cannot so easily be divorced from the memories of an intercourse with these distinguished friends—an intercourse which never for one moment suffered interruption, even from a shadow of estrangement? I enclose you my check for five hundred dollars, leaving you and the gentlemen in charge of the purchase to act your pleasure in the matter.'"

Another service he rendered the Academy, a few months later, was the delivery of an inaugural address at the opening of its new building, on the corner of Twenty-third Street and Fourth Avenue, in which he described the progress of the arts since he first came to the city, and indulged in many pleasing reminiscences of the earlier artists whom he had known. He had spoken, a year before, at the laying of the corner-stone of the structure, and was glad to welcome the members of the institution, who had previously led a somewhat nomadic life, to so beautiful and permanent a home.

The same year, soon after the dedication of a costly and spacious building for the Boston Society of Natural History,

a course of lectures was inaugurated for the teachers of the public schools of that city. These lectures, with ample illustrations, covered botany, conchology, and general zoology; and not only were these several branches considered, but the best manner of imparting such instruction to the young was practically exemplified. Mr. Bryant expressed his interest in the scheme in the following letter:

"NEW YORK, MARCH 27th:* I am very glad to hear of the plan mentioned in your letter of bringing together the teachers of the public schools in Boston to hear eminent naturalists speak of their branch of knowledge, and to inspect the collections of natural history in your principal museum. The interest in these studies so awakened will, of course, have its influence on the instructions of the teachers; and will be communicated through them to a vast number of pupils.

"Man is necessarily a naturalist. It is a remarkable passage in sacred history which relates that all the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air were made to pass before the father of the human race, who distinguished them from each other, and gave to each species the name it was afterward to bear.

"We learn, almost unconsciously, to separate into classes the animals which share with us the breath of life, the plants of the earth's surface, and the minerals of her bosom. But the knowledge of nature gained in this manner is unavoidably imperfect, defective, and sometimes delusive. The educated naturalist comes in and supplies deficiences, and rectifies mistakes, showing the innumerable degrees of relation which the works of creation bear to each other, revealing to the inquirer a new world of beauty and order; a mighty and magnificent system of parts, in which the most perfect harmony is united with boundless variety, from the largest objects of vision even to the minutest forms of existence, which perhaps the unaided eye might not be able even to detect.

"I cannot but wish the most complete success to a plan so well calculated as yours to exercise and strengthen the faculties of the mind, and to fill it with reverence and gratitude to the great First Cause of all things."

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* To the Rev. R. C. Waterston.

In his address to the Union army, Mr. Bryant had predicted the speedy close of the war, and it came even sooner than he had anticipated. The relentless onslaught of Grant, in his approaches to Richmond, and the grand march of Sherman to the sea-coasts, had surrounded the principal forces of the rebellion, and compelled a surrender. On the 9th of April the bloody resistance to the supremacy of the Government —"the gentlest sway that Time in all his course has seen"— came to an end. The news was speedily telegraphed to all cities and towns, and their inhabitants were made by it almost delirious with joy. In New York it was posted on the bulletins of the newspaper-offices about ten o'clock in the morning of the next day, and before noon every store was closed, every flag was raised, every street was filled with crowds of men, who shouted their delight as they shook each other's hands, or fervently embraced. In the evening the city blazed with illuminations and bonfires. At the Union League Club, where leading citizens were gathered to congratulate one another, Mr. Bryant was called upon to give utterance to the general feeling. He spoke warmly—perhaps never so warmly before —for he saw in the event of the day the triumph of the cause for which he had labored for more than half a century. Slavery was at length and in reality dead. It required still some little legislation to drive the nails of its coffin, but it would never again revive. The curse which for two hundred years had desolated the most fertile and beautiful region of our country, and spread its awful blight even far beyond its original seat, was lifted, and was lifted forever.

Writing to Miss Sedgwick later of the event, he said:

"Roslyn, June 26, 1865: I have for some time past thought of writing to you, by way of congratulating you on the suppression of the rebellion and the close of our bloody Civil War. And yet I have nothing to say on the subject which is not absolutely commonplace. All that can be said of the terrible grandeur of the struggle which we have gone through, of the vastness and formidable nature of the conspiracy against the life of our republic, of the atrocious

crimes of the conspirators, of the valor and self-sacrificing spirit and unshaken constancy of the North, and of the magnificent result which Providence has brought out of so much wickedness and so much suffering, has been said already over and over.

"Never, I think, was any great moral lesson so powerfully inculcated by political history. What the critics call poetic justice has been as perfectly accomplished as it could have been in any imaginary series of events.

"When I think of this great conflict, and its great issues, my mind reverts to the grand imagery of the Apocalypse—to the visions in which the messengers of God came down to do his bidding among the nations, to reap the earth, ripe for the harvest, and gather the spoil of the vineyards; to tread the wine-press, till it flows over far and wide with blood; to pour out the phials of God's judgments upon the earth, and turn its rivers into blood; and, finally, to bind the dragon, and thrust him down into the bottomless pit.

"Neither you nor I, until this war began, thought that slavery would disappear from our country until more than one generation had passed away; yet a greater than man has taken the work in hand, and it is done in four years. It is a great thing to have lived long enough to see this mighty evil wrenched up from our soil by the roots and thrown into the flames."

But the sounds of rejoicing had scarcely died away upon the air when the telegraph reported the assassination of the President—the great leader in the contest just successfully brought to an end. In an instant, almost in the twinkling of an eye, the houses and streets which had been festooned with flags and other emblems of joy were covered with the crape of mourning. Announcing this sad event, the "Evening Post" said:

"How awful and solemn the blow which has fallen upon every true heart in the nation! Abraham Lincoln, the man of the people, whom the Providence of God had raised to be 'the foremost man of all this world,' in the flush of his success over the enemies of his country, while the peals of exultation for a great work accomplished were yet ringing in his ears, when his countrymen of all parties, and liberal

minds abroad, had just begun to learn the measure of his goodness and greatness, is struck down by the hand of the assassin. All of him that could perish now lies in the cold embrace of death. His warm, kindly, generous heart beats no more; his services to his nation and to mankind are ended; and he has gone to the Rewarder of all sincere, honest, useful endeavors. The tears and lamentations of twenty millions of people, who are stricken as they never were before by the death of a single man, follow him to his bier, as their gratitude and lasting reverence will follow his fame through all time to come.

"Mr. Lincoln had earned the love of his countrymen to a greater degree, perhaps, than any other person who filled the President's chair, scarcely excepting the 'Father of his Country.' For Washington the universal feeling of love was turned to a grave and profound awe by the imperturbable dignity of his character, and the impressive majesty of his presence. No one could approach him, even with those deep and lively sentiments of admiration which the grandeur and disinterestedness of his career always awakened, without being impressed with a certain solemn veneration. Next to Washington, President Jackson had taken the firmest hold of the popular mind, by the magnanimity of his impulses, the justness of his sentiments, and the inflexible honesty of his purposes. But the impetuosity of Jackson, the violence with which he sometimes pursued his ends, made him as ardent enemies as he had friends. But Mr. Lincoln, who had none of Washington's elevation, or none of Jackson's energy, yet by his kindliness, his integrity, his homely popular humor, and his rare native instinct of the popular will, has won as large a place in the private heart, while history will assign him no less a place in the public history of the nation.

"It was the fate of Mr. Lincoln, without solicitation or wish of his own, to become the leader of the people at a time of gigantic disturbance and transition; during four years of convulsive and almost agonizing civil war he has been the centre of the tumult; upon him it has fallen to direct the movement and to give tone to the spirit of the public. How ably he had managed, the flags upon every housetop at the very moment of his death bore a gay and exultant witness; how skilfully he had avoided and postponed needless troubles, the ease and tranquillity of our return from a time of passionate conflict to a time of serene repose is a proof; how wisely he had contrived to put off the

suggestions of an extreme or fanatical zeal everybody has been ready to acknowledge, for Mr. Lincoln brought to his high office no prejudice of section, no personal resentments, no unkind or bitter feelings of hatred, and throughout the trying time of his administration he has never uttered one rancorous word toward the South, or toward his political opponents. He contemplated the responsibilities of his great charge with the calm desire to do his duty under the light of conscience and truth, and for the best interests of his country.

"The whole nation mourns the death of its President, but no part of it ought to mourn that death more keenly than our brothers of the South, who had more to expect from his clemency and sense of justice than from any other man who could succeed to his position. The insanity of the assassination, indeed, if it was instigated by the rebels, appears in the stronger light when we reflect on the generosity and tenderness with which he was disposed to close up the war, to bury its feuds, to heal over its wounds, and to restore to all parts of the nation that good feeling which once prevailed, and which ought to prevail again. Let us pray God that those who come after him may imitate his virtues and imbibe the spirit of his goodness." * (Ap'l 14.)

As soon as Mr. Lincoln was laid in his tomb, it occurred to a great many minds simultaneously — Bancroft, Chase, Sumner, etc. — that Mr. Bryant was the proper person to prepare his memoirs. Mr. Whittier, writing from Amesbury, as early as the 30th of April, suggested the subject, expressing the most earnest wishes that he would undertake it, and assuring him that no one living was likely to execute it with more satisfaction to the public. Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes had anticipated the request three days before, saying: "If you will undertake it, the whole country will be grateful to you. It would be a double monument, enshrining your dear memory as imperishably as that of your subject. No man combines the qualities required for his biographer so

* As the funeral procession moved through the city, bearing the body of the martyred chief, Mr. Bryant wrote the ode for the occasion, (*a*) and a little while later he addressed the Century Club at its commemorative meeting.

(*a*) See "Poetical Works," vol. ii, p. 151.

completely as yourself, and the finished task would be a noble crown to a noble literary life." Mr. Bryant was not inclined to engage in so laborious a task, even if he had thought the time propitious, and he wrote to Mr. Holmes, declining it, as follows:

"ROSLYN, MAY 1st: Your letter is so persuasive that, if persuasion could have changed my purpose, I will not say that it might not have prevailed with me. There are various reasons, however, some of which are personal to myself, and others inherent in the subject, which discourage me from undertaking the task of writing Mr. Lincoln's life. It is not only his life, but the life of the nation for four of the most important, critical, and interesting years of existence, that is to be written. Who that has taken part like myself in the controversies of the time can flatter himself that he shall execute the task worthily and impartially?"

These letters may find a place here:

"ROSLYN, MAY 4, 1865:* I did not see the number of the 'Daily Advertiser' to which you refer,† and it was not to be found about the office of the 'Evening Post,' so I sent to Boston for it, and have just got it. I agree with it very fully. That is a strong and a very striking point which it makes, that the legislatures of the Southern States should not be suffered to repeal their ordinances of secession. To repeal an ordinance implies that until its repeal it is in force. The government of the States in revolt are mere revolutionary organizations, which the Federal Government can no more recognize than it can the government of which Jefferson Davis is the head. They have all, I believe, altered their constitutions so as to conform them to their state of separation from the Federal Government, and they must all be recognized under new constitutions.

"I see that the point made in Richard's speech on the assassination of Lincoln is more fully set forth in the speech made the next day after the surrender of Lee, published in the Boston 'Transcript,' which he or you were so kind as to send me. This matter of restoring the Union is one in regard to which it is, I think, easy to go wrong.

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* To R. H. Dana.

† Containing an article by R. H. Dana, Jr.

There are three parties in regard to it—those who were concerned in the rebellion, those who are for punishing almost everybody, and those who are for punishing nobody. If no example should be made, and the men who took the lead in the rebellion—and they are not very few in number—should be allowed to go at large, I could by no means feel sure that the people would not be moved to take them in hand, and execute justice upon them in their rude way, which we ought, if possible, to prevent.* It is a comfort, as you say, to be able to think so well of Everett's conduct in his later years, and to get a better opinion of his public character."

"ROSLYN, MAY 22, 1865:† "What you say of the numerous deaths which have taken place among the survivors of our class, though striking, does not surprise me, since we have all arrived at the part of the bridge when those who do not fall through the broken arches are the exceptions. I suppose there is scarce one of the class who, if he had lived till this time, would not be more than seventy years old; and three score and ten, you know—

"It is not my intention to deliver a poem at Williams College, or anywhere else. I once delivered a Phi Beta Kappa poem at Cambridge, and that was forty-four years ago; but since that time I have uniformly declined all requests to do the like, and I get several every year. It is an undertaking for young men. If I could be put back to twenty-six years of age, and my wife with me, I might do it again; youth is the season for such imprudences. I should never be able to satisfy myself in the composition of a poem on such an occasion; and then it should be an exceedingly clever thing; not a work for the closet, though, and admirably read—read as you would read it, and as few can—not to bore the audience. You have observed that such poems, with few, very few, exceptions, are unspeakably tiresome."

An incident of the summer, described in the subjoined correspondence, gave Mr. Bryant considerable pleasure.

"SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., JULY 17th:‡ On a recent visit to the Mammoth Grove in this State, as I entered the forest proper of the

* More lately, Mr. Bryant doubted the expediency of punishing the rebels.

† To Mr. Charles F. Sedgwick.

‡ From Mrs. M. R. Moore.

so-called 'big trees,' my first feeling was one of awe, of worship, if you will, and involuntarily there rose in my mind these words: 'The groves were God's first temples'; and never did they seem so appropriate as when, standing in the midst of this patriarchal forest, the mind attempted to trace their history far back on the stream of Time. Three thousand years of life!

"As we passed through the grove we saw that many trees bore names of which all Americans are proud—Webster, Clay, Everett, Starr King, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, our lamented Lincoln, and of others whom we claim as kindred in feeling, if not as brethren; Richard Cobden and John Bright—statesmen, warriors, scholars, and men, whose names are household words. But, as I remarked that as yet no poet had been so honored, a feeling of joy rose in me that perhaps the proud privilege might be mine of christening one of those magnificent growths. I made inquiries of the owner of the grove in regard to it, and was informed that all that was necessary was to send a marble tablet appropriately lettered, and it should be placed on the tree I might select. Accordingly, I selected the second tree at the right hand of the path very near the entrance of the grove, a very old tree, one of the largest, and one that has not only braved the storms of centuries, but which has felt the scourge of the savage-fire. It is a splendid specimen of a green old age, still strong, still fresh, the birds yet singing in its lofty top, a fitting emblem of the poet of the forest, Bryant."

Mr. Bryant replied from Roslyn, August 30th:

"My dear Madam: I thank you for the great honor you have done me in giving my name to one of the venerable trees in the Mammoth Grove of California. I hope that the tree which you found vigorous and flourishing will be none the worse for it.

"The portion of the bark which you were so kind as to send me, as well as the cone and seeds, reached me safely through the kindness of Mr. Brown. The seeds shall be committed to the ground, in the hope that they will sprout in due season; the cone and the bark are placed among my curiosities.

"I do not much wonder that, in naming these trees, political and military celebrities should be first thought of. The events of the last four years have kept the public attention fixed upon the actors in our

political stage, and the gallant deeds of our commanders in the war have, for the moment at least, thrown all other kinds of fame into the shade. That I should be the first of our poets whose name is inscribed on one of these giants of the forest is an honor which, I fear, if it had been left to the arbitration of public opinion instead of the partiality of an individual, would not have been awarded to me. Perhaps, however, the length of time during which I have been before the public as an author—more than half a century—had its weight with you in connecting my name with one of the most remarkable productions of your magnificent country.

"And really it is a most magnificent region that you inhabit; such a genial and charming climate, scenery amazingly beautiful, and vegetation of wonderful richness and vigor! In certain respects your climate resembles, in others surpasses, that of the same latitude in the Old World. May you find in that region, when your social relations shall have taken a permanent form, a nobler Europe—freer, more virtuous, and more happy.

"Thanking you for the kind wishes expressed at the close of your very obliging letter," etc.

A month later, writing to a friend in England (Mr. Ferdinand E. Field), he said:

"NEWPORT, R. I., AUGUST 19th: I have been passing a few weeks at a place to which I shall return in a day or two—I mean Cummington, my birthplace. Here I have repossessed myself of the old homestead and farm where my father and maternal grandfather lived, and have fitted it up and planted a screen of evergreens, from ten to twenty feet in height, back of it, to protect it from the northwest winds—though that is of little consequence in summer—and here I pass several weeks in the warm season. The region is high—nineteen hundred feet above the level of the sea; the summers are cool, the air Swiss-like, and the healthiness of the country remarkable. . . . Well, you have got rid of your Irish church establishment. You are waiting, I suppose, to see the English establishment go after it. It is a great day for England—that which sees that old yoke taken from the neck of Ireland, and Gladstone's will be a great name hereafter."

The death of the President, and the murderous assault upon his principal secretary, Mr. Seward, did not for a moment embarrass the Government, or arrest the course of that measure of universal emancipation which Mr. Lincoln urged. The last month of the year saw the amendment abolishing slavery throughout our dominion made a part of the fundamental Constitution, and Mr. Bryant, in writing of it, could not help referring to the agency of his own journal in producing the result.

"We cannot say how much we rejoice in laying to-day before our readers the official document from the Department of State which declares that three fourths of the States composing the Union have ratified the amendment to the Constitution prohibiting the further existence of slavery within the United States and all the places subject to their jurisdiction. It has often been said that the institution of slavery is at an end in this country, but never until now could we say that it has been abolished by the solemn verdict and sentence of the nation. The formal assent of twenty-seven States to the repeal of the law of bondage has snapped the last link of the fetters which galled the limbs of four millions of God's children and our brethren. It puts the seal—a seal never to be broken—upon the mouth of the bottomless pit into which that foul abomination has been thrown. Slavery is gathered at last to those accursed institutions which have long since passed away, and are remembered only in history; to bloody tyrannies now no more; to human sacrifices offered to Moloch, and the burning of heretics at the stake. . . .

"It is now more than thirty years since the 'Evening Post' began to demand that the Federal Government should clear itself of all responsibility for the existence of slavery in the States. In the free discussion of the topics connected with that great question this journal has incurred through all that time no little odium and obloquy. Men from whose personal virtues a more manly course might have been expected feared to give it their countenance. The political party with which it had the nearest affinity in the support of all other measures of policy regarded it with dislike, and the leading journals of that party disclaimed all association with it. The political tendencies of the time flowed strongly, and with the force of a torrent, in favor of

giving the Government and all its influence into the hands of the slave-holders, and making slavery a federal instead of a local institution. Politicians of both parties threw themselves into this current of public opinion, and suffered themselves to be carried along with it; but the 'Evening Post' steadily and firmly resisted it until the tide turned against the slave-holders. The election of Mr. Lincoln showed that a change had taken place in the public mind, and that the party of slavery could no longer hope to rule the republic. Even then, however, we could never, but for the madness of those who had hitherto held the power, have hoped to see in our day the glorious result in which every friend of his country and of the human race now rejoices. The most that we hoped for was to confine slavery within certain limits, and there, as a senator from this State once admirably expressed it, to let it, like a scorpion surrounded by a circle of glowing coals, sting itself to death. Its death, we think, would have surely come, even if the Civil War had not been forced upon the Government; but not in our day. In referring to the part which the 'Evening Post' has taken in the controversy, we do not mean to claim any special merit, nor to overlook the persistency and courage of those who stood by us and encouraged us. Their party, small at first, was a growing one as the encroachments of the slave-holders became more daring and enormous. The formation of the Free Soil party, the struggle for the occupation of Kansas, and the rise of the powerful Republican party, were so many forms of protest against the wickedness of human bondage. At the bottom of them all was the conviction in the general mind that slavery was a great wrong. This protest against slavery was thundered still more loudly and fearfully from the cannon's mouth on many a bloody battle-field and in many an obstinately contested siege, until our armies were fully victorious, and the close of the war was followed by the renunciation of that accursed institution throughout the United States." *

Of this event he wrote also to Miss Sedgwick about the same time:

"New York, December 30th: Since I last wrote to you we have had another great event, another great public blessing to be thankful

* "Evening Post," December 19, 1865.

for—the adoption of that amendment to the Constitution which wipes out the blot of slavery forever. It is fortunate to have lived at a period in the history of the human race illustrated by so magnificent an act of justice; it is worth living for even were this life to be followed by no hereafter. How different it is to live now, and behold these tokens of moral advancement, from what it was to live in the time of the decline of the Roman Empire, when political liberty had almost disappeared from the earth, when the light of civilization was going out, and the shadows of barbarism seemed forever closing over the world!"

His sentiments on the great consummation were subsequently expressed in a poem on "The Death of Slavery," which may be regarded as the national hymn of thanksgiving for its release from the curse.*

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* "Poetical Works," vol. ii, p. 152. See remarks also in Notes.

CHAPTER FORTIETH.

A DOMESTIC AFFLICTION.

A. D. 1866.

MR. BRYANT might well have retired from the political field at this time, in the happy consciousness that one of the great objects for which he had long battled was definitively accomplished by the adoption of the Constitutional amendment emancipating the blacks. But the close of the war brought up other questions, of no little moment, requiring the wisest resources of statesmanship for their settlement, which he was unwilling to desert. These related to the various conditions on which the shattered Union should be restored. His views on the subject were very broad and liberal. Strenuous as he had been for the prosecution of the war, he was no less strenuous, when the war was over, in support of a conciliatory policy. Opposed to regarding the States lately in revolt as merely subjugated provinces, to be governed henceforth by rigid military rule, he would have had them brought back with as large a liberty of self-government as might be compatible with general safety. As for the negroes recently admitted to freedom, he insisted that their civil rights should be guaranteed and protected by the Federal power, while the right of suffrage essential to their self-defence and education would be granted, he thought, by the States, if these were to be admitted to representation in Congress only in so far as they recognized that right, or according to their voting popu-

lations. On many of these points he was not in entire accord with the prominent leaders of his party; but it is needless now to enter into the details of the controversy. They are incidentally touched upon in some of these letters:

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 15th:* I think my last letter to you was written before the close of our war, so suddenly and most happily ended, at all events before the glorious amendment of our Constitution which prohibits slavery in all the States. That frightful inconsistency in our institutions can no longer be cast in our teeth by you of the Old World. We are now debating the principles on which the Union shall be reconstructed. Some are for compelling the States to grant the colored race the immediate right of suffrage; others fear tumults and disturbances, and the necessity of keeping a military force at every place where the polls are held. They prefer to make the proportion of representation in Congress and the electoral colleges, which choose the President, depend upon the admission of the African race to the right of voting. This, and homesteads on the public lands, and an extension of the powers of the Freedmen's Bureau, they think will eventually secure the right of suffrage to the negro, as soon as he becomes intelligent enough to vote. This seems to me the only safe course. Mr. Sumner is the great champion of the other, but his genius is not practical. . . . How convenient it is for you in Great Britain to be so near the Continent, with its variety of nations and languages and climate, and places remarkable for striking aspects of nature, or haunted by venerable traditions and historical associations! You just step out of your little island and find yourselves in another world. Go as far as from New York to Bridgeport, and you are in Paris; as far as from New York to Albany, and you are in Germany; as far as from New York to Washington, and you are in Italy. I may not be quite exact, but am not far from it. Journeys such as we here make every week—some of us, I mean—carry you to the ends of the Continent. We, on the other hand, to reach Europe must toss for weeks on 'the black deep,' as Homer calls it, and perform an eighth part of the circumnavigation of the globe. That is one of the advantages of living where you do, and if I were there I

* To Miss Christiana Gibson, of Edinburgh, sojourning in Italy.

should often cross the Channel. But, if you were here, perhaps the necessity which takes you to the Continent would not exist. May you find the health you are in search of among the soft airs of the Italian valleys."

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 19th:* I recollect a member of Congress from Virginia named Archer, a prosy speaker, whom I have heard making a long harangue in the House, while nobody listened. Once he made three speeches on the same question, whereupon some wag applied these lines of Young:

"'Insatiate Archer, could not one suffice?
Thy shaft flew thrice, and thrice my peace was slain.'

I have written an occasional poem, at your suggestion, which is more than I have done for any man for long years.

"'Insatiate Osgood, could not one suffice?'

You must really excuse me—

"'Why wilt thou break the Sabbath of my days?'

In the winter of life the fountain of Hippocrene crystallizes into ice; and if I were ever so young, occasional verses would be a dangerous experiment. I have more requests to write them than perhaps you would imagine, and am forced to give them all the same answer."

"NEW YORK, MARCH 3, 1866:† From something in your late letter to my wife, I infer that you do not think with me in regard to the proper method of reconstructing the Union. Such is my desire not to be misunderstood by those whose good opinions I so much value as that of yourself and your excellent husband, that I am tempted to write this letter by way, as members of Congress say, of explanation. As for President Johnson, I am not responsible for what he says or does. I leave him with you, to deal as you please with him.

"I am strongly in favor of negro suffrage. Our Government ought to confer it upon the colored people in the District of Columbia, as an example to the whole of the Union, and as an act of simple justice. Equally just is it that the colored race should be allowed the right of

* To Dr. Samuel Osgood, who requested a new hymn.
† To Mrs. R. C. Waterston.

suffrage in every State, and I wish to see our Government take measures which will ultimately secure it to them without danger to the public peace, or violence to the structure of our Government—measures of which negro suffrage will be the natural consequence, or which will persuade the late rebel States to concede it.

"The Freedmen's Bureau should be continued in existence for a time, to protect the negroes in the helplessness arising from their present poverty and ignorance, and to reconcile the two races.

"The wise provision in Mr. Trumbull's bill, renting them homesteads on the public lands in the South, and giving them a right to purchase these homesteads, should become a law.

"Then, I think, Mr. Conkling's proposed amendment should be adopted, which directs in substance that, until the colored race receive the right of suffrage, it shall not be counted to any State as a basis of representation.

"With these measures, if the blacks are ill-treated in any part of the United States, they will settle on the public lands in communities, and then suffrage will be a necessity, for they must elect their local officers. Consider also the natural effect of a state of freedom. The negroes are laborious, orderly, temperate; the Southern whites are indolent, proud, disorderly, with constitutions tainted by an hereditary thirst for whiskey. The blacks are eager to be educated; the poor whites, which are the majority, indifferent to the advantages of education. The blacks have already their schools, and are advancing rapidly in intelligence; they will soon have their schools everywhere, and in a very few years their educated men, their professional men, even their politicians and public orators and journals, asserting their rights. The wealth of the South—that great source of power and influence, unless a great change shall take place in the character of the whites of the South, not to be looked for in this generation—must inevitably pass into the hands of the blacks, since they have the qualities by which wealth is acquired.

"The South has always been greedy of political power. Adopt the Conkling amendment, which Mr. Sumner, unfortunately, I think, opposed, and which the Democrats also seek to decry, and South Carolina loses half her political importance, half her representation in Congress, half her vote in the choice of President. This amendment makes it the interest of the South to concede suffrage to the blacks.

"These are peaceful methods; to me they seem sure to bring about the desired result quite as soon as the negroes will be able to exercise the right of suffrage intelligently. It will be conceded to them cheerfully, and then it will be exercised without molestation.

"Mr. Sumner's plan is to force negro suffrage upon the whites of the South, and to keep the late insurgent States under the arbitrary rule of the Federal Government until they submit to this change.

"I apprehend the worst consequences from this—a bitter hatred of the North, a fiercer and more brutal contempt of the rights of the negro, the necessity of a large standing army, disturbances, turmoils, and perhaps bloodshed; a vast and corrupting executive patronage, twelve millions of people under the direct rule of the central Government, without a voice in its legislation, and the republic converted into an empire.

"This is what may be expected if the party of which Mr. Sumner is the principal leader prevails and retains the power.

"But the tide may turn, and the Democratic party—the meanest and narrowest of all the parties at the North, whose main principle is contempt for the equal rights of the negro, and which opposes the plan I have sketched as vehemently as it does that of Mr. Sumner—may, in consequence of the division in the Republican party, obtain, sooner than we could imagine, the ascendency. Then the moderate, pacific measures of which I have spoken will be wrecked, and nothing will be done by the Government to aid the negro in the acquisition of political rights. Even then I should not despair of his acquiring them, such faith have I in liberty and the progress of civilization, though I should deeply lament what had happened. You see we differ, not as to the end, but as to the means. I have long foreseen that this difference would arise among the friends of the Union—the effect of a difference in political training. May God overrule it in the interest of universal liberty.

"You speak of Robertson's 'Life and Letters.' I was reading the work to Frances when your letter came. What a comprehensive system of theology was his, and how wise he was in many respects, yet was there something morbid in his mental constitution. He suffered greatly, yet some of his sufferings were caused by his own habits of life and study. He overtasked his brain, took little exercise, and was an ascetic in regard to recreation, and seems to have had no other

idea of amusement than killing birds. He seems to have had no domestic life, and I infer that his marriage was not a happy one. A great deal of the gloom which hung over his mind was the effect of mental exhaustion and physical weakness. It is curious to see how he contrived to keep within the pale of the church of England with all his strong tendencies to liberalism, and I am not satisfied that he did not sometimes resort to a little sophistry to reconcile this tendency with orthodoxy."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 1st:* My last letters to you were letters of congratulation on the aspect of public affairs. I do not know that there is at present much matter for congratulation as concerns the proceedings at Washington. To say the truth, I am a little disgusted with the conduct on both sides; but my comfort is that while the wisdom of man expends itself in quarrelling and counterplotting, the wisdom of God is arranging the new condition of things by an inevitable law, and bringing order out of confusion. The great change which has taken place in the extinction of slavery will produce its blessed consequences in time without much help from politicians. It is now the holiday of the year, and the country around me is beautiful; the trees, most of them, full-leaved, and noisy with birds. Yet we have had a sour spring and sullen, with the exception of a few paradisiacal days."

In 1865 Mr. Bryant purchased the old homestead at Cummington, with a view to benefiting the health of his wife more than for his own gratification. He expected to take her thither in the summers, and, in order that her sojourn might be pleasant, he had caused a new house to be built, and invited all his relatives in Illinois to join him in "hanging the pot." She was delighted with the prospect. "It is the dear old homestead," she wrote to Mrs. Waterston in May, "where my husband passed his childhood and earlier youth; but he does not mean to forsake Roslyn." She was not, however, destined to enjoy the new home. Her illness so increased during the month of May, that she was obliged to take to her bed. Dr. John F. Gray, the family physician, called the disease an ob-

* To Miss C. M. Sedgwick.

struction of the liver, accompanied by water on the heart. In the course of June the brothers, with their families, arrived in Cummington to participate in the expected house-warming; but on the 4th of July Mr. Bryant was compelled to write to one of them that Mrs. Bryant was too ill to meet her friends. She suffered greatly for the next few weeks, and on the 27th of July she expired. Mr. Bryant communicated the sad event to his brother Arthur the next day:

"ROSLYN, JULY 28th: You could not have expected, when you sent off your letter of the 26th, such an answer as I must now write. Frances died yesterday morning at eleven o'clock. Though she had suffered great anguish of body during the greater part of her illness, her death seemed comparatively easy. She often desired it as a relief from the intensity of her sufferings, although she earnestly wished to recover and remain a little while longer on earth with me and her children, and her other friends to whom her attachment was always warm. You knew her as a person of uncommonly tender sympathies, and always most ready in doing good, but perhaps you did not know at the same time how strong and unerring was her sense of right and justice. It is not often, I think, that the two co-exist in such perfection together. We have been married more than forty-five years, and all my plans, even to the least important, were laid with some reference to her judgment or her pleasure. I always knew that it would be the greatest calamity of my life to lose her, but not till the blow came did I know how heavy it would be, and what a solitude the earth would seem without her. As for her, she is in a better state of being.

"Julia, between whom and her there was considerable resemblance of character, is quite overcome with the calamity, though not so as to lose her self-possession, or to unfit her for the duties now cast upon her. It will be sad news for Fanny and for her children, who were very fondly attached to Mamma By, as they called her, and who are never to see her again.* Whether Julia and myself will be at Cummington this summer I cannot tell. The sorrow that has fallen upon us may lead us to desire a change of scene for a short time."

* Mr. Bryant's elder daughter, with her family, was in Europe.

To his brother John he wrote at the same time:

"ROSLYN, JULY 28th: I thank you for the expressions of sympathy in your letter. As respects myself and Julia there is now a sadder occasion for them than when you wrote. Yesterday morning at eleven o'clock Frances left this world for a better. During her illness, which has lasted somewhat more than ten weeks, she has endured great pain and distress, but at last the one symptom was inexpressible weariness, and she seemed to pass, without much suffering, to her rest. Her life seemed to me to close prematurely, so useful was she and so much occupied in doing good, and yet she was in her seventieth year, having been born on the 27th of March, 1797. It is now more than forty-five years since we were married—a long time, as the world goes, for husband and wife to live together. Bitter as the separation is, I give thanks that she has been spared to me so long, and that for nearly half a century I have had the benefit of her counsel and her example. To large and quick sympathies, which were always impelling her to some kindly action or other, she joined an instinctive rectitude, which caused her spirit to rise against every form of injustice committed on others. But you knew her quite well. I did not begin this letter to write her eulogy. I am only endeavoring to explain how difficult I find it to admit that she did not die before her time. . . . I had planned many things in remodelling the house for her comfort and convenience. How little we know when we form our projects of what is before us. Her illness and death have greatly diminished my interest in the place, yet I am glad that so many of the family have passed a part of the summer at the place, and are, I hope, the better in health and spirits for the sojourn. It was partly on their account that I bought and fitted it up. I only wish that I had bought it earlier, and that Austin and Cyrus* might have passed a summer there."

Mr. Bryant had been all his life familiar with the contemplation of death; his writings, from the earlier "Thanatopsis" to the later "Waiting by the Gate," are more full of it, perhaps, than those of any other author; and during a long career he

* Brothers who died a year before.

had many occasions to lament the loss of near and cherished friends. But, now that the grim shadow was projected into his own home, it seems for a moment to have chilled him to the very centre of his being.

> "For well he knew that a brightness
> From his life had passed away,
> And a smile from the green earth's beauty,
> And a glory from the day."

"Never," writes the Rev. Mr. Waterston, who knew them both intimately, "never did poet have a truer companion, a sincerer spiritual helpmate, than Mr. Bryant in his wife. Refined in taste and elevated in thought, she was characterized alike by goodness and gentleness. Modest in her ways, she lived wholly for him; his welfare, his happiness, his fame, were the chief objects of her ambition. To smooth his pathway, to cheer his spirit, to harmonize every discordant element of life, were purposes for the accomplishment of which no sacrifice on her part could be too great." In a brief memoir of their intercourse, written immediately after her death for the eyes of his daughters alone, he said: "I never wrote a poem that I did not repeat to her, and take her judgment upon it. I found its success with the public to be precisely in proportion to the impression it made upon her. She loved my verses, and judged them kindly, but did not like them all equally well." *

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* Mrs. Waterston, in a letter to me, recalls her last visit to Roslyn. "In the autumn of 1863," she writes, "we visited Mr. and Mrs. Bryant at West Point, where they occupied Mr. John Bigelow's charming cottage, 'The Squirrels.' From there we accompanied them to Roslyn, and spent a week under their own roof-tree. How much we enjoyed those days I need not say. Mrs. Bryant's health was very delicate, and she sat much in her large chair by the open wood-fire, which blazed under the old tiles of the chimney-place. Mr. Bryant sat at her feet when he read in the autumn twilight those exquisite lines, 'The Life that Is.'

"Such was our last meeting with our dear Mrs. Bryant. I never saw her again, but the thought of her ever dwells like a sweet strain of music amid the varied notes of human life, and will be ours again when

"'Beyond these voices there is peace.'

From the letters of condolence written to Mr. Bryant on his bereavement, and his replies to them, my space permits me to take but a few which refer to the character of his lost companion:

"WALPOLE, N. H., AUGUST 2d:* I have been waiting a few days, out of respect for the sacredness of your grief, to offer you the poor comfort of my profound sympathy with your inexpressible loss. All the world knew the beauty and strength of the tie that has just been broken, but none who had not the happiness of a personal acquaintance with the loveliness of that gentlest of her sex can appreciate the loneliness in which you are left. I can only hope that your joy in the rest which has come to her after these few last years of infirmity may enable you to bear with less anguish the sorrow that has come upon you. The good Providence has spared her long beyond the expectations of her friends, and it almost seems as if she had been kept alive these few last years by the force of her affections for you. Thank God! those affections survive, and I rejoice now to recall some words of yours years ago, in which you told me that no doubts of immortality had ever troubled your heart. Your poetry has elevated and soothed so many thousands that I am sure you are finding in your own soul the best consolation your bereavement admits of. I shall not presume to point you to hopes and promises which you are more familiar with than I am. I believe that this affliction will only give the world and your friends new proof of the strength and loftiness of your character, and perhaps turn, as all your experience has turned, into permanent instruction and inspiration for the world. I will not remind you that your separation in the order of

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The union between Mr. and Mrs. Bryant was a poem of the tenderest rhythm. Any of us, who remember Mr. Bryant's voice when he said 'Frances,' will join in his hope that she 'kept the same beloved name' in Heaven. I remember alluding to those exquisite lines, 'The Future Life,' to Mrs. Bryant, and her replying, 'Oh, my dear, I am always sorry for any one who sees me after reading those lines, they must be so disappointed!' Beatrice and Laura have not received such tributes from their poets, for Mrs. Bryant's husband was her poet and her lover, at seventy as at seventeen. Mrs. Bryant's letters showed her beautiful character in its appreciative sweetness, grace, and simplicity."

* From the Rev. Dr. H. W. Bellows.

nature will be short, for I pray that you may be spared these many years to lead and delight your countrymen. May her precious memory give a new inspiration to your song, and may you find in the sacred gift of poetry a balm for your wound, which may prove a healing for thousands of other stricken hearts.

"Your life has been so rich in service, so blessed with fruits and with friends, that I cannot think of you, even in your widowerhood, other than as among the most favored of God and man. To have had such a wife to lose is the greatest consolation for her loss."

"NAHANT, AUGUST 4th:* I have heard with great pain of the calamity which has fallen upon you, none the less overwhelming because long dreaded and expected. I know that I cannot console nor comfort you in any way, yet I cannot refrain from writing these few lines to say that I am thinking of you, and sympathizing with you and your daughters. When I think of Mrs. Bryant as I knew her since so many years ago,† and recall her sweetness and truthfulness and nobleness of character, and all her excellence, I feel deeply what your loss must be.

"I will not attempt to say anything more, except that, with kindest remembrances to Fanny and Julia, I am always, very sincerely, yours."

"CAPE ANN, AUGUST 29th:‡ And so you are in the house where your grandfather and your father dwelt? What a continuity of lives that must give you, or rather what a continuity of life running through so many individuals, and pervading yourself, yet, in this unity, not making you less a self—yea, rendering self more living—flowing into self tenderly, thoughtfully, and in the stream of continuity bearing you by a secret, inward influence, on, and on, and quickening in you a sense of our immortality. And so it is, my dear Bryant, that those who are taken from us do not entirely leave us, but are borne along in this living flow, to be again blended with us in an ever-present. To the right minded, death duplicates those who are taken from us; we think of them, see them as they were, and yet with the sense of loss; and

* From H. W. Longfellow.

† Since 1835, when she was left to his care in Heidelberg, on the sudden recall of Mr. Bryant to his home. See *ante*, vol. i, pp. 311, 323.

‡ From R. H. Dana.

again they are all spiritual, all life, incapable of death; it cannot touch them. Did you ever have such a sense of life till now?

"Pardon me, my old, dear friend, I did not think of saying anything like this when I sat down to write you; it came upon me, and you must forgive me, if I have said too much, or have intruded upon you in what its very secretness makes sacred."

"CUMMINGTON, SEPTEMBER 1ST:* I was hardly calm enough to answer immediately the very kind letter you wrote me about the time of my wife's death. I thank you for your ready sympathy, which was no less than what I expected from you. You knew my wife pretty well, but you did not know how much one peculiarity of her character—her concern for the welfare of others, always strong in her—had grown of late years. The last time that she went out—then not quite well—was for the purpose of providing a poor worthy man in the village with a garden near his house. He had for years been unable to hire a piece of land under his window. My wife got the owner and the poor man face to face, struck a bargain, paid the rent in advance, and put the man, eighty years of age, in possession, greatly to his delight. She has bequeathed several of her poor people to my care. One of her great anxieties was lest, by the decay of illness and years, she might become useless to those among whom she lived. I know, my dear friend, that she is happier where she is now than even her generous sympathies made her here, yet when I think of the suffering which attended her illness of eleven weeks, of the patience with which she compelled herself to endure it, and of her strong desire to do God's will, I cannot help feeling a sharp pang at the heart, notwithstanding that I am able to think of her as now beyond the reach of death, pain, and decay, with the Divine person whose example of love and beneficence she sought to copy, with the humblest estimate of her success. In this point of view my grief may be without cause, but there is yet another way to look at it. I lived with my wife forty-five years, and now that great blessing of my life is withdrawn, and I am like one cast out of Paradise and wandering in a strange world. I hope yet to see all this in the light of which you speak—the light in which 'death duplicates those who are taken from us.' Mean-

* To R. H. Dana.

time, I perceive this: that the example set me by her whom I have lost—of absolute sincerity, of active benevolence, and of instant and resolute condemnation of whatever is unrighteous and inhuman—is more thought of and cherished by me than during her lifetime, and seems invested with a new sacredness.

"You will excuse whatever egotism there is in this, inasmuch as you seem to desire it, and I am sure there is scarcely any person to whom I would write on this subject as I am doing to you."

At the close of his summer visit to Cummington, Mr. Bryant returned to Roslyn, where he wrote the exquisitely touching lines entitled "October, 1866," * and prepared for his sixth journey to Europe. His object in going abroad again was partly to escape the sad associations of his desolated home, but more to contribute to the health of his younger daughter, broken down by her recent affliction. To Mr. James T. Fields, of the "Atlantic Monthly," who asked him for a poetical contribution, he replied as follows:

"ROSLYN, OCTOBER 18th: It is very kind of you to pay me the compliment of asking me for more verses for the 'Atlantic Monthly.' It is almost enough to make an old man think himself a poet again. I can, however, send you nothing at present. I have nothing on hand, and nothing occurs to me; and, as I do not care to write verses 'mit Gewalt,' as the Germans say, or 'whether or no,' as we say in old-fashioned English, I pray you, for this time, to hold me excused."

His real reason, however, for non-compliance with Mr. Field's request was, that he had already formed a project for escaping from his depression of mind by translating the whole of Homer. The fifth book of the Odyssey, and certain passages of the Iliad, having been so favorably received by his friends, he thought it possible to complete the entire work; and, at any rate, he knew that the attempt would divert his thoughts from their sorrows. Providing himself, therefore,

* See "Poetical Works," vol. ii, p. 156.

with a portable pocket edition of Homer, he devoted his attention, wherever he went, to the pages of the old Greek. He adopted a rule that he would render about forty lines a day into English, but he never allowed the task to interfere with his other occupations or his usual out-of-door exercises.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIRST.

THE SIXTH VOYAGE TO EUROPE.

A. D. 1866, 1867.

MR. BRYANT sailed for Europe in the latter part of October, 1866, and I glean from his private letters such an account of his uneventful journey as they afford:

"AMÉLIE-LES-BAINS, PYRÉNÉES-ORIENTALES, DECEMBER 17th:* I got your very kind letter of farewell at Paris some days since, and cannot resist the temptation to answer it. I had a quick passage across the ocean, and a smooth one—nine days and a few hours—but, though the sea was not rough, the screw-steamer Périere, in which we were, rolled so from side to side that most of the passengers were sick, I among the rest, and it has taken me much longer to get over the sickness than it ever did before. We landed at Brest, where the French coast sends a long neck of land far into the Atlantic and finds an island temperature. It is a fine, picturesque, old Breton town, with houses of a quaint architecture, on a bold shore, with high ramparts, and all around were green fields, long grass as fresh as in May, and winding hedge-rows of various shrubs, with more than half their leaves on the branches. We went to Paris, stopping at Rennes to see its fine promenades and views, and at Chartres to look at its noble old cathedral, one of the finest I had seen. At Paris we remained but a fortnight, and that an unpleasant one. It was so dark and rainy, and chilly and wet, that I took no comfort; and I found that I had too

* To R. H. Dana, Esq.

many acquaintances there. Besides, you can imagine how sad the place must seem to me when I tell you that I had never visited it before but in company with some friend now no longer living.

"So, as soon as Julia was ready, we came away to this place, only stopping for a day at Blois, to see the grand old castle, a former residence of the kings of France—the good Louis XII, the cruel Charles IX, Francis I, and two or three of the Henrys. The building has been restored in the old manner, so as to make it look precisely as it did in the times of the monarchs, with the same coloring of the walls, the same gilding, and all the architectural embellishments, and is certainly a striking reproduction of the somewhat barbaric magnificence of the time of Catharine de' Medici, who died in this castle.

"As we approached this place we came out of the mist into sunshine, and here we can see the evening star again. This is a place of hot springs, open all the year, but most resorted to in winter, on account of the uniformity of the climate; for, lying in a little valley of the Eastern Pyrenees, it never feels the piercing winds that sweep down from the Alps and chill the whole region north of these mountains, reaching sometimes even to Nice. Here flourish the orange- and cork-tree and the evergreen oak, and I clamber, by zigzag paths, up precipices, in the crevices of which grow the broom, lavender, rosemary, and other little shrubs that keep green all the year. The hot springs gush out at the foot of these precipices in little brooks. They have an impregnation of sulphur, and are a place of considerable resort for invalids, hundreds of whom are now here. They were known to the Romans, and I have just been looking at a Roman pavement, part of an ancient bath, upon which M. Périere, the Parisian financier, is erecting a building, constructed in the old Roman manner, with vaulted cells on the sides, and a plunging bath —a *piscine* they call it here—in the middle."

"AMÉLIE-LES-BAINS, DECEMBER 18th:* We were rejoiced to hear again from you at Paris, but our pleasure would have been infinitely greater if we could have met with you somewhere upon the Continent. If you were now with us at this winter watering-place, for example, I am sure you would be entertained for a little time at least. Here

* To Miss C. Gibson.

they say the cold of the winter months never comes; there is never frost enough to

'Mould the round hail or flake the fleecy snow.'

I saw two or three banana plants to-day in the garden of the Bujade House, where we are staying. The orange here perfects its fruit, and various plants of the tropics are planted in the walks. There is a low chain of the Pyrenees which defends the place from the *mistral*, which, coming down from the Alps in the winter months, benumbs all the south of France with cold, except a few sheltered situations like this. Here, at the foot of a tall, grim precipice, cloven to a vast depth, to let through a noisy stream, hot springs break forth, some of them sulphurous and medicinal, and frequented in the time of the Romans. These and the benign climate bring to Amélie-les-Bains great numbers of persons, mostly French, with a very few English and Germans, some of them invalids, and some not. It is called a dull place, however, by the French—*un triste séjour*—and indeed it is so to those who have no resources in themselves, for there are no entertainments that I can hear of, and no excursions, or almost none, to be made. Yet the walks are pretty among the precipices, and up the crags, tufted with heath and broom and lavender and rosemary; and through the vineyards on the hill-sides, with here and there an olive-tree, an evergreen oak, or a cork-tree in full foliage. One or two of these paths conduct you to cascades in the stream that comes tumbling down through the deep and narrow chasm of which I have spoken. The people of this region, as far as Perpignan, speak the Catalan language, and are, I suppose, a branch of the Catalonian race. Their physiognomy is somewhat peculiar, but intelligent, and sometimes they are handsome."

"AMÉLIE-LES-BAINS, DECEMBER 20th:* I got your kind farewell letter in Paris, and thanked you in my heart for such an evidence of your friendship. I was very glad to hear that your ill-health is not attended with much suffering, and pray that it may never be.

"I did not leave home for my own delectation, nor to get rid of the associations of the place; indeed, I felt some unwillingness to

* To Miss C. M. Sedgwick.

come away; but Julia, whose health is quite delicate, desired to come abroad, and her physician thought it might do her much good. So we came, taking the resolution rather suddenly. I was in Paris a fortnight, and wondered to find it so dreary a place. . . . Here is one of the most equable winter climates in Europe, with a sky almost continually serene. In this valley grow the orange and the cork-tree, and the evergreen oak, and various plants of the tropics find no degree of cold which they cannot survive. A little palm-tree is springing up under my window. I climb the crags back of the house where I lodge, and the air is fragrant with lavender and rosemary, and other aromatic herbs, growing in the crevices of the rocks, and bruised under my steps. At the foot of these tall precipices gush out copious hot springs, some of them containing sulphur, and these supply large numbers of bathing-rooms, to which invalids resort from all parts of France. Hundreds of this class, many of whom will not go away any better, are here, and other hundreds who come for the sake of the climate. Among them are perhaps half a dozen English, and one American besides myself, who cannot speak a word of any language but his own, and is in a hotel where nobody speaks English, so that he has society with some of the advantages of solitude."

This was the last letter Mr. Bryant wrote to the friend of many years, whom he held in so affectionate a regard. In the summer of the next year, and before his return, she died, but with his name among her dying thoughts. "Her strong love for her friends," Mrs. Rackeman, one of her nieces, wrote to him in July, 1867, "outlasted all her other powers. For some weeks before her death she used to write scraps of farewell to one or the other of them, and one of the last of these, which she began by dictating, she finished with her own hand, thus: 'To all, my love; God bless you all! Bryant and Whittier you have (illegible) my life; but these I shall see no more on earth.'"

"SEVILLE, ANDALUSIA, SPAIN, JANUARY 22, 1867:* I did not expect, in visiting Europe this time, to be so much interested by what

* To Mrs. L. M. S. Moulton, of Roslyn.

should come under observation as I had been at previous times, and I must own that I never travelled with so little curiosity to see what is peculiar or admirable in foreign countries. Perhaps this may be in part the effect of age, but that is not all; I cannot keep the thought of Roslyn out of my mind; and, the sadder its memories are, the more I cling to them. They are constantly diverting my attention from what is before my eyes.

"You see the 'Evening Post,' and will therefore read some account of our wanderings. Julia and myself are visiting those parts of Spain which I did not see before. We do not find winter travelling here very pleasant, nor would I recommend it to any person. The days are too short; the mornings and evenings, even in those parts which have the softest climate, with the exception of Malaga and Cadiz, are too chilly. You are benumbed with the cold till ten o'clock, and the chill returns upon the atmosphere between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. Besides this, there is the disadvantage of seeing the country in its undress, when it has the least vegetation. The spring is the time to see Spain, the season when the days are long and the earth in its holiday attire—the time of the singing of birds—early spring for Catalonia and Valencia and the south of Spain, and later spring for Madrid and the northern and mountainous parts. So, when you visit Spain, do it, I pray you, if you value your own comfort, in spring.

"The impression which Spain, as a nation, has made upon me in this visit is that of a country the people of which are somewhat imperfectly civilized. Bull-fighting, gambling, sitting or standing in the sun—that is to say, idleness—and smoking, are their vices. I cannot call them hospitable as a nation; on the contrary, with all their formal courtesy, they deserve to be regarded as inhospitable; but they have other ways of showing kindness to strangers, nor are they by any means deficient in these. They are not—the young men in particular—so well bred as they ought to be, and do not scruple to stare rudely at foreign ladies, to make uncivil noises, and sometimes, I am told, even to accost them. With all this there is a good deal of kindness in the Spanish character, and they have their way of doing very obliging things. It is very dangerous to condemn the people of any nation by any sweeping charge.

"I have seen Cadiz, but Cadiz had nothing to show, save clean,

straight streets, handsome-balconied houses, and the ever-restless sea roaring all around it. Cordova has pleasant outlooks over a rich valley toward mountains green with oak- and cork-trees; but Cordova wears an aspect of decay. Seville is cheerful to the eye, and abounds with works of art. In Seville one might, I think, manage to pass a winter not unpleasantly, but for my part I would rather be at home."

"FLORENCE, ITALY, FEBRUARY 27th:* It is true that I saw Lord Lytton, though I do not know how you heard of it. I dined with Mr. Bigelow, and he was of the party, as well as the Duke of Seville, brother of the king of Spain, a little man of a villainous aspect.† I signed the letter to Mr. Bigelow, but was not at the public dinner given him. . . . From Perpignan, to which we returned from Barcelona, we went to Nismes, and, after looking a little at its ancient remains and gardens, we took the railway to Hyères, on the Mediterranean, where we passed one day in a beautiful country with a charming climate, made so in winter by the shelter of a circle of hills to the north. Here our host put us into rooms just vacated by General McClellan, and seemed quite proud of his late guest. The drive at Hyères, along the sea-shore, is exceedingly beautiful. Hyères is full of palm-trees and orange-orchards. Another day's journey, and a short one, by rail, brought us to Nice, where we passed a pleasant week, and then hired a man, a Roman and a political exile, to take us in a carriage, with all our big trunks, through Genoa to Spezzia, where the railway, interrupted at Nice, begins again. We stopped, in coming to this place, a day at Pisa, to look at its buildings, and another at Lucca, and here we have been just a week in Florence, and a rather comfortable one.

"On Sunday I went to the Independent Evangelical Church, an assembly of Catholics who have separated themselves from the papal hierarchy, and worship in their own way without a clergyman. They seemed solemn and earnest, and in the pauses between the exercises, which were rather long, read diligently in the New Testament, a copy of which was in almost every hand. The exercises consisted of singing hymns, extempore prayers, readings from the Bible, and exposi-

* To John H. Bryant, Esq.

† There is a reference to this dinner in Lord Lytton's "Parisians."

tions of the passages read. The communion was administered. A small loaf of bread entire, as it came from the baker's, was carried about, and every one pinched off a piece. This was followed by a large tumbler of red wine, of which every one tasted; and all this without any preliminary or subsequent words. The room was full, and the attendants quite well dressed. I am told that those who belong to this new persuasion number about three thousand in Italy. The political state of the country is not satisfactory. The public debt is great, the taxes are exceedingly heavy, and the cost of living much dearer than it was. The people also are discontented with the burden of military service. The relations between church and state are unsettled, and the ministry is inclined, it is thought, to concede too much to the priests. . . . I do not like the aspect of our politics in America. It is impossible to imagine public men behaving worse than the President and Seward are doing; the Republican party is so strong that it is lunging into grievous follies, and may yet wake up to find the other party strong enough to dispute its ascendency.

It was during the stay in Florence that Garibaldi arrived, on his way to Venice, where an extraordinary brilliancy was to be given to the festivities of Carnival, in order to celebrate the withdrawal of the Austrians from Italy. Mr. Bryant and the popular hero were somewhat acquainted in New York, when the latter was helping a friend to carry on his trade on Staten Island, and they met by appointment at Garibaldi's rooms, with great cordiality. Their talk was in Italian, Garibaldi not using English fluently, though he understood it very well, and it related principally to the political prospects of the peninsula, of which the hero spoke with sanguine hopes. Mr. Bryant, whose face was turned toward Rome, was unable to accept an invitation to accompany him to Venice, where those who were fortunate enough to be present witnessed a reception of him by the people, which for warmth and enthusiasm has seldom been surpassed. More than half a million visitors thronged the sea-girt city, to testify, by shouts and cheers, their admiration for its guest. Prince Humbert, now

King of Italy, was scarcely remarked amid the splendid ceremonies that greeted the national idol.

"ROME, MARCH 25th:* Our little party expect to be in Paris the beginning of May, and we have engaged lodgings there for the whole of that month, after which we shall go, God willing, to Scotland. . . . For my own part, I have been so little interested in what I have seen during this visit to Europe that I have often wished that somebody were in my place whose curiosity had a sharper edge than mine, and that I were back at Roslyn. Yet the country about Rome is now quite beautiful. The Villa Borghese, just outside of the walls, is full of flowers, and the general mother, whose breast contains the dust of so many old Romans, from Romulus and Remus down to the modern invaders, is every moment turning that dust into luxuriant herbage and blossoms. The deciduous trees alone are slow in feeling the breath of spring, but there are many shrubs in their new leaves; and the grass is high, and spotted with crimson and purple anemones, besides which are various evergreens, shrubs, and trees, some of them in bloom. The temperature since we have been here is most agreeable, sometimes inducing a feeling of languor, but never oppressively warm. There does not appear to be any great apprehension entertained of any disturbances for political reasons at present, and everybody says that if any should take place it will not be until after Easter, when strangers leave the city, and the Romans expect to get no more of their money. We have in the mean time a ship of war at Civita Vecchia, commanded by Captain Hopkins, whose business it is to protect the American citizens at this place in case they should need a place of refuge. It seems, however, to be fully understood that the government of Victor Emmanuel will not encourage any rising of the Roman people while the present pope lives.

"I went the other day to Osten, not far from the mouth of the Tiber, where a large space is covered with hillocks and mounds, the indications of the site of a considerable city, and here within a few years excavations have been made uncovering the lower part of walls which were once parts of dwellings and temples. In the neighborhood Pliny had a villa. We went to Castel Fusino, which must have been

* To Miss J. Dewey.

near that villa; it stands among lofty pines, a habitation deserted by its proprietors. A road, paved by the old Romans with flat, broad stones, leads directly from it to the sea, whose murmur blends with the sighing of the pines. The road is embowered with evergreen oaks, the arbutus and the tree-heath, now in bloom, and the daphne and rosemary, also in flower, border it, and beneath them spring the cyclamen and other flowers—a most cheering walk, ending in a sand-hill, at the foot of which dashes and roars the Mediterranean."

In a short excursion to Frascati, Mr. Bryant took a severe cold, which became a fever, and rendered his return through Germany very unpleasant. On his arrival in Dresden he was saddened by the receipt of a telegram from Geneva telling him of the death at that place of a grandson, a promising child of about six years of age. The shadow of his nearer sorrow was still over him, and this sudden and painful loss came to deepen its hues. Writing to his bereaved daughter, he said:

"DRESDEN, APRIL 21st: It distressed us greatly yesterday to learn by telegram of the death of poor little Walter. I returned from a walk in the early part of the evening, and found Julia in tears, with the paper communicating the sad news in her hands. There is nothing that we can say to break the force of such a blow as this must be to you and your husband, and to all of you. It is but a slight consolation to reflect that, for the short period it lasted, his life was an innocent and happy one. It would be a still greater if we could hope that our own lives would be so passed as to make us the fit companions for a soul so guileless in the world beyond the grave. . . . I need not tell you how much Julia shares in your sorrow, nor how much she mourns that so sweet a life should be allowed so short a date. Praying that God may temper this calamity to you all, and make it in its results a source of blessing, I am affectionately," etc.

"PARIS, MAY 8th:* We have had a prosperous journey from Italy, through Germany, to this place, going from Rome to Ancona, and thence to Venice, and stopping a while at Trieste, at Vienna, at

* To Miss C. Gibson.

Salzburg, at Munich, at Nuremberg, at Dresden, at Heidelberg, at Baden-Baden, and at Strasburg. The season, however, after we left Italy, where it was soft, sunny, and genial, we found rather cold and rainy, and at Munich we had a snow-storm. Salzburg enchanted us. Dresden we found a pleasant city, and Heidelberg and Baden-Baden, in the bloom of their orchards, were delightful. Yet wherever I go I cannot help thinking of a place several thousand miles off, now more than ever dear to me, and at the same time saying to myself, How glad I shall be when I get back to it again! We hope at some time or other to see you there again, and to show you how much more beautiful it has become since you left it. We have also just acquired a place in town, to which we could welcome you on your landing."

"LEAM, NEAR LEAMINGTON, AUGUST 20th:* I have to thank you for a letter and two journals containing my brief letter, which I found here waiting my arrival, and since that others have come to hand, which I also owe to your kindness. Your countrymen do me too much honor. I had no idea that what I wrote for the 'Evening Post' would have had such a run in Scotland, and even now I suspect that I owe its republication in several of the journals to the kind intervention of your sister, who is always engaged in doing something for her friends. I have no doubt that the republication of my letter will convey my name to multitudes of readers who never heard of it before. . . .

"We are passing a pleasant time here in a great house—at least a roomy one. Mr. and Mrs. Field have both lived in America, Mrs. Field almost as long as you, and their two children were born there. They have now just returned from the United States, in which they made a very extensive tour, extending their journeys to Charleston southward, and to St. Louis and Chicago westward. They took their children with them, and returned with favorable impressions of my native country. Mr. Field, who seems to be the leading man in the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, went out on the errand of seeing what could be done to carry into effect an object which commercial men here have much at heart, but to which the government of Great Britain and Mr. Mill object—that of respecting and sparing all private

* To Miss C. Gibson.

property on the high seas in time of war, although belonging to the citizens of an enemy's country, just as it is respected on land. He found the principal men almost everywhere well inclined toward such a change in international law. You may remember that the American Government, through Mr. Marcy, once proposed it to the ministry of this country, but that it was rejected. There is great disappointment on the part of the liberal merchants at Mr. Mill's opposition to the proposed change.

"I am counting, as I have done for some time past, the days that separate me from Roslyn, and shall soon begin to count the hours. It is, I suppose, the habit of the mind, in old age, to concentrate its attachments upon some particular spot—a sort of presentiment of the narrow space which all that is mortal of us must soon occupy among the inanimate and motionless things of the earth."

"BANGOR, NORTH WALES, JULY 29th:* I got your letter the day before yesterday, and am much obliged to you for it, as well as for the abstract from Mr. Verplanck's address on laying the corner-stone of the new Tammany Hall, which reads as if it might have been furnished by the orator himself, and is neatly penned. . . . I am very glad to see in the speech evidence of the vigor of my old friend's faculties at his advanced age. I hope the Century Club will not think of me as its next president. It is irksome to me to preside at any public meeting, and it would be a very becoming thing if the members would offer the post to their old president, Mr. Verplanck.

"We have been looking at the English lakes, and are now making the tour of North Wales, the most picturesque part of Wales, with Miss Christiana Gibson in our party. It is a very beautiful and varied region, but those who can see the White Mountains and the Adirondacks and the Alleghanies have no need to come to Wales for striking mountain scenery. We have seen Conway, mentioned in Gray's 'Bard'; and Llandudno and Penmaen-Mawr, and climbed it, at least I did; and Bettws of Coed, and Crag Lledoer, and Festiniog, with its cavernous slate quarries; and Capel Curig, and the Swallow Spout, and Naut Frangon, and various other Nauts and Moels and Pens, and heard Welsh songs sung by Welsh maidens, and have been

* To Miss Julia M. Sands.

run after and shouted at by Welsh beggar boys. But we have still several other places to see, expecting to be out of Wales some time in the first week of next month. We found it cold in Scotland, but it is quite as cold here. I have slept under three blankets for nearly a week past, but I am told that the season is colder than usual. We are at a famous hotel here, *The George*, but we can get no fruit, not even a gooseberry, though it is the time both of strawberries and gooseberries. To do the climate justice, I have been several times in Great Britain during the summer months, and never found it so chilly before. There are a great many shade-trees in the country, but I do not see the use of them.

"I write this with the Straits of Menai under my window, the tide flowing into that very narrow arm of the sea, the island of Anglesey opposite, but a little more than a stone's throw distant, apparently, and an elegant suspension bridge and the great Tubular Bridge in full sight from our hotel."

"LIVERPOOL, AUGUST 23d:* To-morrow at one o'clock we take our leave of England, where I have met with much kindness, and from which I shall carry away the most agreeable recollections.

"You remember that we often talked of the impending church reform—the remodelling or dissolution of the national Church of England. At Leam I met a zealous partisan of the reconstruction of the Church, to use a phrase borrowed from the present state of American politics. It was the Rev. Mr. Lake, the Unitarian minister at Warwick, who, although a Unitarian, has never separated from the Church of England, and who desires to preserve it as the national Church, with its basis so widened as to admit men of all diversities of religious belief, with its dignities retained, but the parishes left to appoint their own ministers, and choose their own mode of worship, without any restraint of creeds, all of which are, according to his plan, to be abolished. It seems to me that a long time must elapse before any such change will be made. I read, however, not long since, in the 'Edinburgh Review' for April, an article on Ritualism, in which the importance of making the Anglican Church essentially a national one was very earnestly dwelt upon, and some such change as Mr.

* To F. E. Field, Esq.

Lake hoped to see effected was more than hinted at as likely to be adopted. It is, of course, in the power of Parliament to make the change, in spite of the clergy."

"ROSLYN, OCTOBER 14th:* We had a rather pleasant time in England. I passed but two days in Edinburgh. I went to Crieff, just on the border of the Highlands, and passed my time with the Gibsons, in company with whom I made various excursions into the region of the Gael. Crieff is a charming place, with very varied and beautiful scenery—mountains, valleys, clear rushing streams, little water-falls, noble woods, and old parks. It has a drier climate than the rest of Scotland, with one or two exceptions; but the season I found chilly in July, and fires were necessary. If the people of Edinburgh were not hospitable to me it was my own fault, for they were disposed to be very much so.

"We made the tour of Wales, Miss Christiana Gibson accompanying us. From one picturesque region to another we held on our journey until I, at least, became quite satiated with the picturesque, and began to wonder when the time should arrive in which there would be nothing more to see. Some parts of Wales reminded me of Berkshire, but there are grim, rocky passes—chasms between precipitous and bare mountains—such as Berkshire cannot show you. We had a few letters to persons in Wales, and were most kindly and hospitably received. You will find—I should say, rather, an American will find—little hospitality on the Continent, but it is not so in Great Britain. We found the country full of sketchers by the road-side, amateurs and professional artists, busy under their umbrellas. The accomplishment of drawing is much more common, and more perfectly acquired, in Great Britain than among us. The Welsh are behind their English neighbors in civilization, as is always the case with races speaking a peculiar language and enclosed in another and more numerous population. . . .

"I confess that all this while my heart turned toward Roslyn, and that I was glad to get back to it, after a not very favorable passage of eleven days across the Atlantic. I find the place very beautiful; the changes please me, but there is a sadness in all this beauty, since

* To Miss J. Dewey.

the eye for which these changes were originally designed can look on them no more. It is now a most beautiful October day; the maples, at the end of our little lakelet, are glowing with the hues of autumn, and over all lies the sweetest golden sunshine. I look out upon the landscape from the bay-window while I write, but in a different mood from that in which I should have beheld it formerly.

"We went to Cummington soon after coming home. On our return I passed a night at Mr. Mackie's beautiful place on the Green River, and four nights at your brother's in Sheffield—a pleasant visit, where they all seemed glad to see me. I cannot see that your brother has grown older for these last ten years. At my time of life it is a great comfort to meet any person in whom the mental and physical faculties do not seem to decline with advancing years."

"ROSLYN, OCTOBER 31ST:* It would give me great pleasure to be a guest at your dinner next week, and to testify my admiration of the writings of Mr. Longfellow, in particular of his translation of Dante, but for the occupations in which I am now engaged, and I must say, also, the habit of seclusion incident to my time of life, and gaining strength as I grow older. Allow me to plead these as my excuse for not coming to the dinner to which you have so kindly invited me. Meantime, I take this opportunity to express in words what my presence could not express more emphatically. Mr. Longfellow has translated Dante as a great poet should be translated. After this version, no other will be attempted until the present form of the English language shall have become obsolete, for, whether we regard fidelity to the sense, aptness in the form of expression, or the skilful transfusion of the poetic spirit of the original into the phrases of another language, we can look for nothing more perfect. It is fitting that Mr. Longfellow's friends should congratulate him, as I heartily do, on the successful completion of his great task."

"BOSTON, NOVEMBER 10TH:† When, a good while ago, I wrote you about your 'Thirty Poems,' I had overlooked 'The Tides.' I remember what we both thought of 'The Past.' I do not know, but it seems to me that 'The Tides' may be fairly placed by the side of it. It is

* To James T. Field, Esq. † From R. H. Dana, Esq.

truly high in the world of mind. . . . What mysterious power in that sixth stanza of 'The Tides'! There have been few minds indeed that ever gave birth to creatures so awfully mystical—those spiritualized sea-monsters! The whole poem has the truly ascending power; it is poetry in its highest mystical spirit; and then, how you feel it to be the struggle of our poor humanity to rise to the divine, and all in vain, till light from above shines down upon it, and its warmth quickens it with its pure love."

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 30th:* The letter of introduction has not been delivered by Lord Amberly, nor have I ever seen him or his lady. As to giving letters of introduction to me, I would always have you use your own judgment. If there is any case in which you do not like to give such a letter, I give you leave to shy. I am not apt to take much to strangers, which is the simple fact; but, if there be any person to whom you feel any disposition to give such a letter, do it freely.

"I am glad you were at the Dante dinner to Longfellow. The circumstance confirmed what I heard from your eldest son the other day, who told me that you were getting to be a well man, after a somewhat invalid life. I infer that you must have been pretty well to go to such a dinner. The close of life is often preceded by a train of infirmities. Do you remember what Milton says?

> "'—for the air of youth
> Hopeful and cheerful, in thy blood will reign
> A melancholy damp of cold and dry
> To weigh thy spirits down, and last consume
> The balm of life.'

And Dr. Johnson—

> "'Unnumbered maladies the joints invade,
> Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade.'

"It is a great blessing to be exempted in old age from what embitters the last years of so many.

"You speak of Halleck's age. The telegram which came from Guilford announcing his death said that he was eighty, but it was

* To R. H. Dana, Esq.

corrected to correspond to the printed biographies of him, and made seventy-two; yet I am by no means certain that this is right. There was always a suspicion that Halleck's age was not rightly stated. Mr. Verplanck tells me that a few days before the news of his death Halleck had written to him, saying that he desired to come to town and dine with him and a few other old friends at some old-fashioned place, and that Frederick Cozzens, author of the 'Sparrowgrass Papers,' was, when the news of his death arrived, making arrangements for this dinner.

"I am glad that you can speak so well of my little poem, 'The Tides.' It was written in the mood in which I produce what seem to me my best verses; and I therefore was once quite disappointed when a friend told me that a person in whose judgment he seemed to have much reliance had told him that there was not much in it. I do not think that you ought to look, as you say, upon your life as a melancholy waste. You have impressed the stamp of your mind upon American literature, and have helped to make it what it is, and what it will yet be.

"You ask me to tell you something of myself. I have little to say that will interest you. I pass my time principally here, going to town sometimes not more than once in a week. I am in the main cheerful, but with some sad hours, and life to me has lost much of its flavor. I trifle a little with Homer, whose poem, I must confess, does not seem to me the perfect work that critics have made it, notwithstanding its many undeniable beauties."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 25th:* I was about to wish you a merry Christmas—you and all the Gibson family—but, when you get this, Christmas will have been moved a fortnight back into the past, and even while I write it is nearly four o'clock of Christmas afternoon with you. But let us be glad that we are permitted to see another Christmas. There is a beauty in the tradition which fixes the birth of our Saviour on the day when the sun begins his journey toward the spring

"Letters like yours, from old and long-tried friends, bring back for the moment somewhat of the old flavor to the banquet of Life, which,

* To Miss C. Gibson.

without my being in any haste to rise from it, has grown a little insipid of late. . . . I busy myself with Homer a little, and, if I live, may finish it. Mr. Dickens is here, and everybody is running after him, but I cannot muster up curiosity enough to go. Those of my household, and many of my friends, have been disappointed, but the newspapers praise him without stint. They—I do not mean the newspapers—say that his voice is not good, neither strong nor musical, and, while they admit his comic power as an actor, they call his reading of parts that are not comic, monotonous, and sometimes, in the pathetic parts, doleful.* Mrs. Kemble is to read again in this country, I hear. This time I think I shall be of her audience, once at least. As to politics, Grant seems fixed upon by the people for our next President, whether we like it or not. Perhaps it is best so. Grant has many sterling qualities, among which his friends claim an insight into men's characters, and great sagacity in the choice of subordinates. I think you need be under no fear that the debts of the nation will be paid in depreciated paper. It would be grossly dishonest, and even the unprincipled politicians, who you know are to be found in all parties, will be afraid to countenance it."

* There is no record that Mr. Bryant called upon Dickens during the second visit of the latter, although it is known he called upon persons residing in the same hotel.

CHAPTER FORTY-SECOND.

AT WORK ON HOMER.

A. D. 1868, 1869.

IMPERATIVE as were the questions of readjustment presented by the close of the Civil War, our editor did not allow them to distract his mind from that gross legislative injustice, a protective tariff, which empowers certain classes of the community to use the despotic agency of Government for their own benefit at the expense of others, and thus to create an enforced communism. He continued his assaults upon it with unabated zeal. For four or five of those busy years he acted as president of the American Free Trade League, imparting energy and effectiveness to its efforts. But, in the winter of 1867, he retired from the office, and the society, in recognition of his services, tendered him a public dinner, which came off on the evening of the 30th of January, 1868. Many of the most prominent free-traders of the republic were invited to attend—such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Governor Tilden, Lucius Robinson, Professors Perry and Bascom, Gerrit Smith, and others—who were either present, or excused their absence in letters which bore ample testimony to a general and grateful sense of Mr. Bryant's deserts. Mr. David Dudley Field presided on the occasion, and, in announcing the toast to the guest, said:

"For the diffusion of just notions in political economy, our guest has labored through a long and honorable life. He is now passing

his years serenely amid the tempests which conflicting interests and passions have raised, conscious of having fought the good fight for truth, and confident, I doubt not, that, sooner or later, it will be victorious. . . . For his services in our cause, which in this festivity are especially remembered, we now offer him our most cordial and respectful salutation. It is not for the poet who has linked his name inseparably with his land's language, nor for the political philosopher who has taught the true theory of government, but for the economist who, amid so much misrepresentation and so many discouragements, has steadily maintained the freedom of commerce and the rights of labor."

Mr. Bryant, in his very modest response, assumed no merit for what he had done, speaking of it as "an easy task," as he had but to follow in the footsteps of more distinguished teachers.* But in this disclaimer he scarcely did justice either to the earliness or the persistency of his efforts. No doubt some of "the best thinkers of the age" had preceded him, and particularly in Europe; but they were for the most part merely thinkers who had confined their propagations to books, while he had endeavored to commend the new truth to a wide popular reception, and in the face of inveterate prejudices and determined hostile interests. As one of the later speakers remarked, long before the formation of the Cobden League in England he had taken up the cause, and it had been a piece of hard work from the outset, requiring a wise forethought, a careful judgment, patient energy, indomitable courage, and a buoyant spirit which was able to hope even against hope.

Mr. Bryant became more and more absorbed in his translation of the Iliad as the work proceeded. To a friend (Professor Alden, of Lafayette College), who inquired why he did not employ his powers on original subjects, he replied that it was not so fatiguing a task as an original work would be. In fact, he added, "I find it a pastime. At my time of life it is somewhat dangerous to tax the brain to any great extent. Whatever requires invention, whatever compels one to search

* See "Orations and Addresses," D. Appleton & Co., New York.

both for new thoughts and adequate expressions wherewith to clothe them, makes a severe demand on the intellect and the nervous system—at least I have found it so. In translating poetry—at least in translating with such freedom as blank verse allows—my only trouble is with the expression; the thoughts are already at hand." He worked only in the mornings, after his usual exercise, when both mind and body were fresh. With a copy of Homer open on his desk, and a lexicon near by, he wrote for three or four hours, and then laid his papers aside for the day. There were other translations on his book-shelves, Chapman, Pope, and Cowper, of course; Voss's German version, and one in Spanish and another in Italian; later on he procured Professor Blackie's; but these he consulted only at intervals, to settle some point of construction of which he had doubts. It confused and fettered him, he said, to know how others had done a passage before him. Besides, he intended his version for popular, not learned, use, and he could give it a more popular cast, he thought, with the original text alone for his guide. The fluency with which he commonly wrote is apparent from the manuscript, where page follows page with only inconsiderable erasures. Yet, at times, there are pages almost illegible from the number of the interlineations and changes. In original composition his habit was to fix his verses in his head while he was walking the fields, and to commit them to paper afterward; and, as his verbal memory was a retentive one, it is probable he pursued the same method in translating the old Greek*.

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* Of his carefulness in composition, one of his friends gives this example:

"Some years since, Professor C. M. Dodd, of Williams College, showed me a manuscript copy of one of Bryant's poems, which he had received from the author. It revealed the process by which a poem was constructed—the different stages of its growth. The poem was 'The Tides,' and there were five copies, written on five separate pieces of paper. In each successive copy there were changes in every stanza except the first one. That seems to have assumed a form satisfactory to the author before he committed it to paper. It appeared in each copy, in the same form in which it was printed. Every other stanza received many changes. Sometimes a form of expression appeared in one copy, and was discarded in the next copy, and

His progress in the task and his other occupations are alluded to from time to time in these familiar letters.

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 24th:* I am translating Homer's Iliad, and have nearly reached the end of the sixth book. I have to-day had a letter from my friend Richard H. Dana, who says that if I translate any from Homer it should be the Odyssey instead of the Iliad. I wish I had thought of this before, for I think he is pretty much in the right; but I have already proceeded so far in the Iliad that I cannot think of undertaking another labor. I believe the gods behave more shamefully in the Iliad than in the other poems, and their conduct is so detestable that I am sometimes half tempted to give up them and Homer together. But Dana commends my translation of the fifth book of the Odyssey, and Longfellow, and others in Boston, have sent me messages that I ought to complete the whole work."

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 17th:† Acting on your suggestion, I have sent a copy of my 'Thirty Poems' to President Hopkins, of Williams College, and have received from him a very kind note. In a letter to him accompanying the volume, I made you responsible for my sending it, for I never in my life sent a copy of my poems to anybody with the design to get a good word from them or to invite their notice of my writings in print.

"I am glad that you think so well of 'The Tides,' particularly as it was written with a certain awe upon me which made me hope that there might be something in it, but a friend of mine once told me that a lady, whose judgment he seemed to respect, had told him that she did *not* think there was much in it. Of course, I now think my first opinion was right. I wish you had said to me earlier what you now say about translating the Odyssey. I have already translated six books of the Iliad, and the task of putting into English verse the whole Odyssey seems formidable to me."

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restored in the third; and many of the stanzas were written over more than five times—the last one, seventeen times, before it was allowed to stand as it was printed."

* To John H. Bryant, Esq.

† To R. H. Dana, Esq.

"ROSLYN, JUNE 2d:* I am busy translating a tale from the Spanish for the New York 'Ledger,'† so that I have just now little time for anything else except what I must give to the paper. When the tale is done I must go to Homer again. I am now arrived at the time of life when there is small chance of completing a literary work of any great length, and must make use of my faculties while I have them."

"CUMMINGTON, JULY 16th:‡ . . . At Cambridge I found my old friend Judge Phillips, who is ten years my senior, deeper in Spiritualism than ever. He communicates with the inhabitants of the other planets, and in particular with those of the recently discovered planet Neptune where Spiritualism was only introduced about five years since. He tells me that in the governments adopted by those who people the planetary bodies there is no vestige of an executive with independent powers, and that the office of king is entirely unknown. . . ."

"ROSLYN, SEPTEMBER:§ At Cummington I had my brother John, one of the best men I know. I had a pleasant time in revisiting with him our old haunts, and the once familiar places in the neighborhood. In many instances the pleasure was a sad one, for only the places remained—their dwellers had passed away. I rejoice to learn that my excellent friend, your dear mother, bears her years so well, and walks so contentedly in the path in which God is leading her. May it ever be a smooth and pleasant one—a path from which all the thorns are removed by loving hands, until in due time, and late, it crosses the barrier at which the infirmities of this life are laid down and the youth of a new life begins. . . .

"If I were a magician, I would have you at Roslyn in the twinkling of an eye, and you would acknowledge that it never looked more beautiful than just at this moment. The green is as fresh as in spring; the full-leaved woods and the clear waters are swept by airs full of life and spirit; the hills are basking in glorious sunshine, and white sails are scudding to and fro in the harbor. On the lakelet before my

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* To John H. Bryant, Esq.

† This was a story by his friend Signora Coronado-Perry, of Madrid.

‡ To Miss J. Dewey.

§ To Miss Christiana Gibson, of Edinburgh.

door two swans, a present from a gentleman who lives in the house at the farther end of that sheet of water, are moving about with lifted wings as proudly as if they were the sole proprietors of the place. They are just arrived from England, and are choke full of English prejudices. They turn up their bills at our American diet, and absolutely refuse Indian corn, absurd islanders that they are! . . .

"You take some interest, I doubt not, in our approaching election of a President. There is no doubt, I think, that Grant will be chosen. The sober people of the country are for him almost to a man, and this class includes many who have not hitherto belonged to the Republican party. We shall certainly carry for Grant nearly all, and perhaps quite all, the Northern States and the entire West. It is not unlikely, however, that several of the late rebel States, now admitted again to self-government, will, by the aid of negro votes, pronounce for Seymour and Blair. It is well that it should be so, for if the negroes are divided between the two parties, they will be well treated by both, in order to obtain their support at the polls. For my part, I am very confident that we shall see Grant President, that the disorders at the South will be repressed, that we shall have peace and the subsidence of party animosities, that the public debt will be honestly paid in gold, and that the beginning of a reform in the morals and manners of the people of the Southern States will mark the incoming of the new administration. . . ."

Mr. Bryant did not take a very active part in the election of this year, although he allowed his journal to support the candidacy of General Grant with considerable warmth. His own preferences were doubtless for the nomination of his friend, Mr. Chase, who had a strong following in both the Republican and Democratic parties, and whose eminent qualities as a statesman and a man he greatly admired; but the military reputation of General Grant rendered his success a foregone conclusion, and it would have been folly to urge the name of any other candidate.

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 30th:* . . . We do not make much progress in the investigation of the frauds which gave the vote of New York to

* To J. H. Bryant.

Hoffman as Governor, nor do I expect any very important results from what the Union League Club is doing. The public conscience is terribly debauched in regard to frauds in voting. One of the committee appointed to conduct the investigation is reported to have said, I fear with too much truth, 'The fact is that they only cheated more than we did.'"

"ROSLYN, DECEMBER 12th:* What you say of the dropping away of old friends is, of course, the common experience of those who reach what is called a good old age. This world grows more and more a solitude as we journey toward the other, which becomes populous with our departed friends. It was Dr. Johnson, I believe, who said that we should keep our friendships in repair. But such repairs are poor patchwork at the best. New friends acquired in old age can never be like the old ones, nor is it easy to form new friendships as we are about to step into the other world. There is always a certain distance between the old and the young which makes itself felt."

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 30th:† The elections have resulted well on each side of the Atlantic. Your church question awakens a good deal of interest here. We all hope that the revenues of the Irish church will not be given to the denominational schools, for that would be to perpetuate the mischief in another form. As to the English church, our good wishes for your country extend to the severance of church and state, and the sooner this takes place the better. I can conceive, however, that there may be some perplexity as to the best manner of bringing it about. . . . I am as glad as you can be that the differences between our two countries are likely to be settled. It is well not to leave this seed of dissension in the earth to sprout hereafter into something more serious. The general feeling here is that of satisfaction at the prospect of a renewed good understanding between the two governments, although Mr. Johnson, our Minister, has given great offence by his behavior toward Laird, who had fallen into deserved contempt with your people for what he did to aid the cause of our rebels."

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* To R. H. Dana, Esq.

† To Mr. Ferdinand E. Field, of England.

"ROSLYN, DECEMBER 14th:* I said nothing in my last about the beautiful cane which you were so kind as to send me through your brother. I got to the end of my sheet, and only thought of the cane after I had sent off the letter. It is quite true that I have arrived at the age when the animal that went upon all fours in the morning, and upon two legs at noon, creeps about upon three in the evening. But I stand pretty firm upon two legs yet, feeling no need of a third, and so have put by your cane, keeping it choice for a season of greater infirmity.† Should that season come before I am sent for, I shall use the cane with the reflection that what we call the Old World is giving its aid to support my steps over the soil of the New, and, as a faithful friend of free-trade, I shall take pleasure in such an illustration of the sisterhood of nations."

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 10, 1869:‡ General Grant has been here, and has been much run after. I did not go with the rest, as you know I never do on such occasions; but I hear that, when they said to him that they were curious to know how he would make up his Cabinet, he answered that Mrs. Grant was equally curious.. . . . But I have been told that Grant makes no secret of his resolution to stop the plunder of the public that is carried on, partly by fraud, and partly by legislation, for personal objects. Of course, he will encounter a terrific opposition, but it is said that he has made up his mind to meet it. One third of the Republican strength will fall away from him if he carries out his resolution with firmness and energy, but that will be no loss. The people will stand by him as they did by Jackson. . . . I have just finished my translation of the twelfth book of Homer's Iliad.§ In regard to what you say about Homer, I would observe that Pope's translation is more paraphrastic than mine, and will probably have several thousand more lines. I have somewhat more than seven thousand of the original to translate. Yesterday I translated sixty of the Greek, making some seventy or

* To Mr. Ferdinand F. Field, of England.

† Which never came. Mr. Bryant used no cane up to the day of his death.

‡ To John H. Bryant, Esq.

§ The first twelve books of the Iliad were published by Fields, Osgood & Co., of Boston, as a first volume, in the course of the next year; but it will be more convenient for me to refer to the work when the whole shall have been completed.

eighty in my shorter blank verses; but generally I cannot do so much. Sometimes not more than forty."

The death of Fitz-Greene Halleck (November 19, 1867) brought to Mr. Bryant a request from the New York Historical Society for an address on his life and character similar to the addresses he had already delivered upon Irving and Cooper. He was, however, unwilling to undertake the task with the Homer on his hands, but the society persisted; and he at last consented to prepare a paper on the subject, which was read to a public audience in February of 1869. Others had spoken at great length of the deceased poet, and he therefore confined himself to a brief characterization of his leading traits, and to such recollections of their personal intercourse as might have an interest for others. The essay gave great satisfaction to the friends and admirers of the poet.

"New York, April 8th:* I have translated fourteen books of the Iliad, and am in the middle of the fifteenth. The task is by no means disagreeable to me; on the contrary, it interests me a good deal, and I go to it daily with pleasure. It is far lighter work than original composition, making no demand upon the inventive, nor putting any strain upon the thinking faculty; and I find that, since I began, I have gained something in facility of versification. At my time of life it is natural that I should feel a little anxiety about seeing it completed as soon as may be, and therefore I go on with it diligently, yet not so industriously as to occasion fatigue."

"Boston, April 14th:† Let me turn back to tell you how grateful I am for your speaking of those few days which your hearers had never heard of before.‡ And it was done so naturally and simply—just like you. It made me sad—very sad—they came so distinctly before me. Allston, with that fine, luminous face, and all so gracious—I remember well the impression he made upon me when he was with his brother Ned, and I a little boy. I did not look upon him as

* To R. H. Dana, Esq. † From R. H. Dana, Esq.
‡ In a little speech at a Harvard Alumni dinner. See "Orations and Addresses."

being a mere human creature, but as belonging to a race somewhere between us and the angels. And I do not think that the impression wholly wore out, even after my manhood and my familiar acquaintance with him. I can see him now, but away, away off, in vague, undefined distance. How time becomes space to us! One word—distance—equally well serves for both. Shall he, and all we have loved, come back, as your 'Past' promises they will? What a glorious time! Time?—what a glorious ever! How cloudy, shifting, and fading would be all this, even if we could have believed or hoped at all, were it not for Him who passed through death and rose to life for us! And think of no man without the sympathy of Him—the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief! There is something in the last familiar word which moves me almost to tears when it comes across me; it is from its very familiarity."

"New York, June 8th:* Your people seem to be somewhat excited about the Alabama question. The principal objection to the treaty here was that it gave the blockade-runners, and other friends of secession on your side of the water, an opportunity to come before the arbitrators with their claims for indemnity from the American Government—a class of claims which we could not consent to submit to arbitration. As to Mr. Sumner's speech, it is simply an elaborate statement of the mischievous consequences to our commerce of the course taken by England toward us in the late Civil War. Probably it is not far wrong in its estimate of these consequences, but, after all, the speech is the utterance of an individual, and has no official significance. We do not get excited here about the Alabama question. The great question of the day with us is commercial reform, or revenue reform, which is rapidly coming into general discussion."

"Roslyn, June 19th:† Most certainly do I expect to pass a part of the summer at Williamstown. So you see that the newspapers are right, as usual. But it is a very small part of the summer—that is to say, two or three days, and perhaps three nights, and these, unless some cause now unforeseen shall prevent me, I expect to pass next

* To F. E. Field, Esq., of England.

† To John H. Gourlie, Esq., at Stockbridge.

week at the Commencement of old Williams. On Tuesday I shall leave Sheffield in company with Dr. Dewey, and return on Friday.

"As to the offer of the 'Times' of $2,500 for a new fibrous substance as a substitute for linen rags in making paper, it does not appear to me that we need give ourselves much trouble about it. The reward in gold, I presume, is enough to induce everybody who has experimented with any such substance to come forward with his invention or suggestion. The 'Times' office will have whole reams of applications showered upon it as copiously as Gifford, according to his own account, was once pelted with sonnets—

"'Reams of outrageous sonnets, thick as snow.'

"I congratulate you on your bad luck in fishing—angling, I should say, for that is a gentleman's amusement; fishing is for those who get their living by it, as the Apostles did. The less luck you have the less temptation you will have for wasting your time in trying to kill the minnows of the brook.

"You are right in saying that things grow too fast in the city. All manner of knaveries grow like Jonah's gourd. Luxury grows apace; prices grow like weeds; rents grow, taxes grow. I do not, however, hear that any man has grown wise and good so suddenly and so greatly as to astonish his friends. But we grow old fast enough, both in town and country. Milton, in one of his sonnets, you remember, says:

"'How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen, on his wing, my three-and-twentieth year!'

The thief hath done worse by me; he hath stolen more than three times the number of years that Milton speaks of. But I quote Milton as an offset to the poetry in your letter, though Milton's lines are not so funny as those you sent me. The country is in great glory. The trees seem to strut in their luxuriant growth and abundance of foliage, and toss their branches about as a young beauty tosses the head in her pride. You spoke of going to Green River the day after writing your letter. If you had given me more notice I would have sent my compliments, for we were once well acquainted, though I dare say Green River has forgotten me by this time."

The Commencement spoken of in this letter Mr. Bryant attended, and at the dinner of the Alumni, having been toasted by name, he made the following brief address:

"It has occurred to me, coming, in the decline of life, to visit this seat of learning in which our youth are trained to succeed us on the stage of the world, that I am in the situation of one who, standing on a spot desolate with winter and dim with twilight, should be permitted by a sort of miracle to look upon a neighboring region, glorious with the bloom of spring and bright with the beams of morning. On the side where I stand are herbless fields and leafless woods, pools sheeted with ice, a frozen soil, and the shadows of approaching night. On the side to which I look are emerald meadows, fields of springing wheat, orchards in bloom, transparent streams, and a genial sunshine. With me it is too late for any further hopeful tillage, and, if the plough were put into the ground, its colter would be obstructed by the ice-bound sods. On the side to which I look I see the tokens of judicious cultivation and careful tendance, recompensed by a free and promising growth. I rejoice at the kindly care thus bestowed, and my hope and prayer is that, under such auspices, all the promise that meets my eye may be amply fulfilled, and that from these luxuriant fields a harvest may be gathered richer and more abundant than has ever yet been stored in the granaries of our land."

"WILLIAMS COLLEGE, JUNE 28th:* I have great pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of yours of the 26th inst., enclosing a check for $500. Strange times we live in, when poets not only possess money, and patronize literature, but make better speeches than anybody else. Thanking you in the name of the college, and assuring you of the great pleasure your visit here gave the friends of the college, I am, etc."

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 2d:† I thank you for the friendly interest you take in my translation of the Iliad. Your observations on the famous simile at the end of the eighth book are worthy of particular attention. Pope's translation is certainly a jumble, but I have also

* From Dr. Mark Hopkins, the President.
† To Professor J. B. Thayer, of Cambridge.

been sensible of a certain confusion in the original description. The manuscript of my translation is now at the printer's, but when I get the proof-sheets I shall consider the point you raise more fully.

"I have thought of the difficulties in the way of omitting the lines to which you refer.* One, that they have been so long recognized as parts of a well-known and familiar passage that readers will expect to see them preserved; the other, that the line which immediately precedes and that which immediately follows the two which you would omit do not unite neatly. In the line before them 'the stars appear brightly,' or 'conspicuously,' and in the line which comes after them 'all the stars are seen.' This tautology is rendered less apparent by the intervention of the questionable lines.

"I had written thus far when it occurred to me to look at different translations of the Iliad. Voss retains the two lines in his remarkable German version. Hermmesilla preserves them in Spanish. The English translations into which I have looked retain them, with the exception of that of Professor Blackie. He omits them, and has a note on the passage in which he gives several early authorities for supposing that they were foisted into the text from another part of the Iliad, and one later authority, Hayne, for supposing the two lines in this place 'insititiores.' Blackie, however, does not translate the repetition to which I have referred, nor does he give any reason for omitting it. I refer to the phrase, 'all the stars are seen.' . . .

"I believe I am indebted to you for some observations in the 'Daily Advertiser' on my version of the interview of Hector and Andromache, by which I shall endeavor to profit."

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 8th: † Your beautiful gift, the autumn leaf, reached me here on the evening of my birthday, at the close of my seventy-fifth year—a mild and genial day. You have drawn and colored it with a skill really marvellous. I had to pass my fingers over it to be certain that it was not a real leaf fastened to the paper. I value it much, and shall dispose of it as you suggest. Please accept, with my thanks, the wish that when the autumn of life shall come to

* The passage occurs between lines 555 and 560, where the stars are twice introduced.

† To Miss Eliza Maria Judkins, of Boston.

you, it may appear as beautiful in your eyes and those of others as your autumn leaf now appears in mine."

"NEW YORK, CHRISTMAS EVE:* I wish you, with all my heart, a merry Christmas, and a cheerful New Year's day, the beginning of a year of serene and sober happiness; but, as Christmas and the first day of the coming year will be past long before you get this, the wish is rather a prayer than a compliment. I got your letter of the 9th, for which I thank you, yesterday, and was sorry to learn from it that my excellent friend, your mother, had been so much a sufferer. I hope she was fully recovered before your letter reached me, and that the holidays will find her able to be as merry as the rest of the world. I hear, with a sort of selfish distress, of the sufferings of people in the decline of life; they seem like a menace of what I must expect. I shrink from the thought of passing to the next life along a path in which pain is to be my principal companion, as there is nothing which makes such rigorous demands upon our exclusive attention as pain. I therefore ask for myself, and for my aged friends, that when our time comes we may

'be with ease
Gathered, not harshly plucked.'

"You speak of the inclement season, Here, also, we have had a premature winter, and an autumn less quiet and beautiful than usual; but to-day has been like one of the finest days of an Italian winter—a sky of spotless blue, a flood of golden sunshine, a bland temperature, and all the winds laid except a gentle breathing from the west. I thought that I might finish my translation of Homer to-day, but the old Greek is refractory, and not to be managed so easily as I supposed, and just twenty-six lines of the text of the Iliad lie over. But my work will not be ended when those are translated. There will be the proofs of the second volume to be corrected—I have corrected those of the first—and then I must carefully revise the whole for a second and cheaper edition. . . .

"Certainly I read Crabbe Robinson's 'Diary.' I could not help reading it when I had once begun it, though I was always wishing that

* To Miss Christiana Gibson, of Edinburgh.

he had given us more particular notes of what his eminent friends said at the calls he was always making at their houses, and the dinners he was always eating at their tables. I knew him. In 1845 I passed a day with him and Edwin Field at a village on the Thames—Wanley, I think, or some such name—and dined at Mendelham Abbey, a hotel on the other side of the river. I do not wonder that he was invited everywhere, for he was one of the best talkers I ever heard speak. He related one or two of the anecdotes which I find in his book, and more interestingly than he has written them down."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 16th:* A friend of mine, and a very clever man, has asked me to obtain for him, as soon as they can be had, the sheets of the first volume of my translation of the Iliad, that he may make a careful review of them for some literary periodical. There was no prompting of mine in the matter, for I never in my life even hinted to any friend that I should like to see a notice of anything I had written; but, if you will send me the sheets, I will put them into the hands of the gentleman who makes the request."

Mr. Bryant was not so wholly engrossed in the "Homer" as to be diverted from original composition. He wrote during these years several of the hymns which now appear in his "Poetical Works," and the pieces entitled "A Brighter Day," "Among the Trees," and "May Evening." He also found time to collect, at the instance of Mr. G. P. Putnam, the publisher, his "Letters from the East," which were issued in a small separate volume; and, besides many brief after-dinner speeches, he made an address of some length on behalf of the "Metropolitan Museum of Art," which has since taken so prominent a place among the great institutions of the city.†

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* To Messrs. Fields, Osgood & Co.

† See "Orations and Addresses." D. Appleton & Co., New York.

CHAPTER FORTY-THIRD.

THE ILIAD.

A. D. 1870.

On the 4th of January, 1870, Mr. Bryant was able to announce to his publishers that his complete translation of the Iliad awaited their disposal. He had begun it in 1865, by rendering a few familiar passages, but the bulk of the work was done after the autumn of 1866.* In a preface of several pages the translator explained the rules by which he had been governed in prosecuting his task. These were: First, to be strictly faithful to the original, omitting nothing and adding nothing, in order that the reader might have what the old Greek wrote as nearly as it could be given in another idiom; and, secondly, to preserve the simplicity of the style and the fluency of the narrative. His aim, he said, was to carry the reader forward without the impediment of unexpected inversions and capricious phrases, so that, if he should find nothing to stop at and admire, there should be nothing to divert his attention from the story and characters of the poem.

Despite his habitual accuracy, however, he discovered, on reading his proofs, that, in the ardor of translation, or the weariness of transcription, he had omitted a considerable number of lines. "These would not," he remarked to his publishers, "affect the sense in any way, nor would they be per-

* Vol. i of the Iliad was issued about the 18th or 19th of February, 1870, and vol. ii about the 10th or 15th of June of the same year. Vol. i of the Odyssey was issued about the 20th of September, 1871, and vol. ii about the 20th of March, 1872.

ceived by a casual reader as an interruption of the narrative; but they make the translation less faithful than it ought to be." Accordingly, he subjected the whole work to a careful revision, comparing line by line with the original, which enabled him to supply the deficiencies he had detected and to correct some blunders, "for I am not too correct," he said, "to commit blunders."

The wide notice it received is a curious incident connected with the publication of the Iliad. Not in the higher classes of reviews and magazines, or in the newspapers of the larger cities merely, but in journals of obscure and remote towns, where it could hardly be expected that much interest in Greek literature prevailed, it was elaborately discussed. Nearly every little college, and even academy, which maintained a professor of Greek, sent forth its critic, who seemed glad to avail himself of the opportunity to air his learning and skill. Many of these reviews, it is pleasant to remark, were written with intelligence of the subject and with good judgment. They were for the most part commendatory, but not more so than the criticisms of better known periodicals, concurring in the opinion that this translation, despite the number and the eminence of its predecessors, was, on the whole, the best that had yet been made into the English tongue. What they signalized for approval mainly were the fidelity of the version, the transparent purity of the language, and the unusual beauty of the versification. Mr. Charlton T. Lewis, a scholar of rare accomplishment, in an erudite discussion of the whole Homeric question, struck the secret of Mr. Bryant's superiority to others when he said * that "in the language of his original poems he resembles the old epic poets more than any other writer of English." Certain "contemporary poets," Mr. Lewis added, "may have excelled his verse—one in splendor, another in suggestiveness, another in fulness of insight and reach of thought, and more than one in nearness to the great mental

* "North American Review," April, 1871.

conflicts of the age; but he has certainly not been surpassed, perhaps not approached, by any writer since Wordsworth, in that majestic repose and that self-reliant simplicity which characterized the morning stars of song. He has adhered to the permanent element in our language; and the common perversions in the meaning of good old words, which make it so nearly impossible even for most men of culture to write a sentence that Chaucer could have understood, seem to be unknown to him. No qualification for a translator of Homer could be more essential than this; and the reader who has only considered its importance will find that it has given Mr. Bryant's translation a vast superiority over all others. The simplicity of Professor Newman's ballad verse is gained only by the sacrifice of dignity; that of the writers of English hexameters is mere baldness; even that of Lord Derby is habitually weak, false, and halting; but that of Mr. Bryant is at once majestic and direct, at once noble, rapid, and vigorous; it is, in a large degree, the simplicity of Homer."

In England, for some reason or other, the work attracted less attention than in this country, and less than its merits deserved. The leading journal, as it is called, asserted that "the performance fell flat upon the ears of an educated audience after the efforts of Lord Derby and others"; but that was not the case. The more critical authorities, for the greater part, spoke well of it, some of them in laudatory terms, but few of them at any great length. "Of all the American poets," said the "Saturday Review," which is not usually generous in its appreciations, "Mr. Bryant is certainly best qualified for such a task. His poetry is of a more classical type than that of any of his contemporaries and countrymen; its grace, power, and scholarly polish, command the admiration of even unfriendly critics," and "his mastery of blank verse is greater than that possessed by any American writer." * Other notices were no less kind, but none of them elaborate or enthusiastic.

* London "Saturday Review," April 23, 1870.

At home the translation was a popular success even; it sold largely from the beginning; and still, twelve years from the time of its first appearance, it is a source of considerable emolument to its publishers and the heirs of the author. Among those with whom Mr. Bryant was not well acquainted, as among his more intimate friends, the expressions of praise were warm and unrestricted. A few extracts from his letters in reply will show the tenor of their opinions.* Mr. Dana, his oldest friend, though ill, was prompt to approve, and to him Mr. Bryant replied as follows:

"ROSLYN, JUNE 20th: I thank you for your very welcome letter, and am only sorry that you should have thought it necessary to write it before your hand was entirely healed. If you had found fault with my translation of Homer generally, I should have concluded that I ought never to have meddled with him. I hoped you might at some time or other write to me about my translation, but I was in no hurry. I knew that you had your cares and sorrows, and did not expect you to take up my book till you could do it as a matter of choice, and out of some curiosity to see how your old friend had performed his task. I am glad that, having taken it up, you found yourself able to go on with it, and you can hardly think how pleased I am that you have found occasion to speak so well of it. Meantime, the work, I find, takes very well with the public. It is commended in quarters where my original poems are, I suspect, not much thought of, and I sometimes fancy that possibly it is thought that I am more successful as a translator than in anything else, which you know is not the highest praise. I did not, however, find the work of rendering Homer into blank verse very fatiguing, and perhaps it was the most suitable literary occupation for an old man like me, who feels the necessity of being busy about something, and yet does not like hard work."

Mr. Dana renewed the subject in a letter of August 3d, but previously took Mr. Bryant to task for some changes he had made in his original poems:

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* Mr. Longfellow was especially kind, but his note has been mislaid.

"I must scold a little, that, notwithstanding the warning Wordsworth should have been to you, you have in cold blood turned critic upon your printed works, the control of which was gone when you handed them over to the public; and yet you have treated them just as if you supposed there was still the same interflow of the warm life-blood that there was before the severance. While poems are still kept close to one's self in MS., changes may be made, but even then not when one is in any doubt about a change. Especially should you, so exquisitely true, be cautious. So slovenly a fellow as I am might make scores of changes, but would any one care whether I did or did not?

"I have not seen your changes, but I have been told of two or three. One in 'Thanatopsis' I remember, the others I cannot recall. Wasn't your own thought that you could not 'pierce' a desert? Why! it is the very term, and affects the mind with any poetry in it, as if making its way straight through the mists of that whose verge had never been passed before. In that delicatest of delicate little poems, the 'Waterfowl,' I am told that you have substituted some commonplace word—I forget it now—for 'painted.' Why! it adorns the whole picture, makes complete to the mind (the poetic, susceptible mind, I mean) the crimson background and the darkly floating *bird*, and envelops him in an atmosphere all aglow, and rounds the several objects with a harmonizing whole. Pray keep in mind, when you would be critical, what is the natural action of a term upon the imagination and sentiment of a poetic nature; when you look at your own, be, so far as you can, in the state in which you gave it birth; above all, turn a deaf ear to him (whoever he may be) who could see nothing in 'The Tides.'

"I ended your translation by myself; I saw no signs of weariness. On the contrary, there are no passages of more beauty and feeling, and more musically rendered, than in the last book. How astir, too, is the Scamander in the twenty-first! Surely yours must take the place of all other translations. Where I thought you might not do so well—in the savage contests and more violent parts—you have come out fully."

"CUMMINGTON, MASS., AUGUST 11th:* You are quite right in regard to the alteration of the word 'pierce' to the word 'traverse'

* From Mr. Bryant to Mr. Dana.

in my poem of 'Thanatopsis.' I must have the original word restored. But in regard to the change made in the 'Waterfowl,' in which the line now stands—

'As darkly seen against the crimson sky,'

instead of—

'As darkly painted on the crimson sky,'

please read what I have to say in excuse. I was never satisfied with the word 'painted,' because the next line is—

'Thy figure *floats* along.'

Now, from a very early period—I am not sure that it was not from the very time that I wrote the poem—there seemed to me an incongruity between the idea of a figure painted on the sky and a figure moving, 'floating,' across its face. If the figure were painted, then it would be fixed. The incongruity distressed me, and I could not be easy until I had made the change. I preferred a plain prosaic expression to a picturesque one which seemed to me false. 'Painted' expresses well the depth and strength of color which fixed my attention when I saw the bird—for the scene was founded on a real incident—but it contradicted the motion of the winds and the progress of the bird through the air. So you have my defence.* You are also quite right in regard to the state of mind in which the author should put himself when he corrects his verses. I have given in a little poem of mine called 'The Poet' the same precept which you give me. I am obliged to you for the trouble you have taken in going through my translation. I have amended for a second edition a fault or two pointed out in one of your previous letters."

"NEW YORK, MARCH 12th:† I congratulate you with all my heart, not on the penance which you have inflicted on yourself in reading my book through, but on having done with it, and not having it to do hereafter. I can imagine that on laying down the volume you drew a long breath of relief—one of those grateful sighs significant alike of the trouble that has been taken and of the satisfaction we feel that it is over. Do you remember Pope's line?

"'And Congreve loved, and Swift *endured* my lays.'

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* See "Poetical Works," vol. i, notes, for further remarks on this change.

† To the Rev. Dr. Dewey, at Sheffield.

It is not every poet that has a friend capable of enduring four hundred pages of his verse.

"I am really glad that you can speak so kindly of my translation. It is well received so far, and sells well, I'm told, for so costly a publication. I am almost ashamed to see it got up in so expensive a manner. Democrat as I am, I would, if the matter had been left to my discretion, have published it in as cheap a form as is consistent with neatness, and a good, fair, legible type. I like very well to see it in a large volume, in that large type, but I should have made it a book for persons of small means—that is to say, if they choose to buy it.

"You have seen the announcement of Mr. Verplanck's death. He was one of our best public men—a politician without a politician's vices—sturdily independent, though sometimes wrong; much in public life, yet never stooping to any act or any compromise of any sort to gain the public favor. They—that is to say, the members of the Historical Society—have already applied to me to say something of his life and character; and as he was an old, and at one time a very intimate, friend of mine, I could not excuse myself, although I have already too many things on my hands.

"I have read Lowell's 'Fireside Travels' on your recommendation—speaking of it as the wittiest book ever written by an American. It is running over with wit certainly, and not only running over, but 'shaken and pressed down.' The seat of American wit now seems to be at Cambridge and its neighborhood. Holmes's 'Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table' always seemed to me a masterpiece in its way, the wit and humor as delicate and spontaneous as those of Addison —wit and humor of the highest class. Hood's fun is rich and inexhaustible, but a good deal of it is of an inferior quality, and sometimes betrays effort. Do you not think there is a great deal of humor in Aldrich's 'Story of a Bad Boy'? The other day we had here a little book for children called the 'Trotty Book,' by Miss Phelps, author of the 'Gates Ajar,' which almost made us split our sides."

"New York, March 24th:* I thank you for your letter and the kind words you say of my translation of the Iliad. The suggestion

* To the Rev. R. C. Waterston.

you make concerning an appendix is a good one, but, unfortunately, I have no time to get it ready before the second volume is to come out. I am engaged in a revision of the translation, and find, to my dismay, that, in transcribing for the press, or in some other way, I have omitted lines here and there, although not in places where the reader would observe any break. This has put me to a close and somewhat laborious comparison of my lines with those of the original. Besides this, I am to get ready a paper on Miss Sedgwick's literary life while she resided in New York, to form part of a memoir which is to appear in the summer, and an old friend of mine, Mr. Verplanck, has just died, and I am to deliver a discourse or read a paper on his life, character, and writings before the Historical Society here; so you see I am overoccupied just now. . . . The death of Mr. Verplanck makes, notwithstanding his great age—eighty-four years—a material vacancy in the social and public life of New York. He was the Chairman of our Board of Commissioners of Emigration, and was placed in other public trusts, to which he faithfully attended up to the last day of his life. His faculties seemed unimpaired, and his mind, one of the most well-stored which has ever come under my observation, seemed to retain all the activity it had forty-five years since, when I first knew him. His death was sudden, and his life and his usefulness came to an end at the same moment." *

"UNION COLLEGE, SCHENECTADY, DECEMBER 28th: † Although I cannot claim the honor of your acquaintance, I have taken the liberty to send to you an article from the 'American Presbyterian Review' for January next. You will see that it is occupied in great part with a dissertation on the Homeric theology and the Homeric Zeus. Please regard it as a testimony of my very great admiration for your translation of the Iliad, of which I have made constant use in my lectures on Homer. It has been a most delightful exercise to compare your version with that of others, and point out to a class its surpassing excellency. Some things in the article are due to its suggestions. I hope you will deem it worthy of perusal, as coming from one who deeply shares your love and admiration for the grand old poet."

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* "What a beautiful tribute," Mr. Waterston remarks, "and how applicable to himself!"

† From Professor Tayler Lewis.

"ROSLYN, JUNE 27th:* I thank you for what you are so kind as to say of my translation of the Iliad. It is a comfort to be told after such a long labor that I have not failed in what I intended. I intended, if I had the power, to make a translation which it would not be a labor to read. I did not make it for those who are familiar with the original, for they have no occasion for it, being already in possession of something better; but I intended it for the sake of English readers, and, if I had not thought that I could give them a more satisfactory version than any of the previous ones, I never would have engaged in it. As for Voss's translation, I admit that it is closer to the original than mine. It is made by an author who was not without reputation in his time as a poet, who was much more learned than I can pretend to be, and who took infinitely more pains with the translation than I have done. This you might naturally infer from his being a German. But I have heard some of his countrymen complain of his version as stiff and constrained in the expression. I must say that I do not see that, but it may be so, notwithstanding. It requires a very familiar and thorough knowledge of a language to judge of the merit of its poetry."

It will be seen that in two of the foregoing letters Mr. Bryant refers to the loss of his old friend Verplanck. In recent years they had not been associated so intimately as in former times; but their friendship still subsisted, and, of course, it fell to the lot of Mr. Bryant to speak the final word for the departed statesman and scholar, as he had done for Cooper, Irving, and Halleck. His discourse was delivered before the Historical Society, to an immense audience, on the evening of the 17th of May. Verplanck had passed more entirely out of public view than either of the former subjects of his eulogy; but his address was no less fervid, painstaking, and eloquent. It was mainly biographical, yet with touches of criticism, and of appreciations of character, which Mr. Bryant alone, of all men living, was able to give. In addition to this more elaborate effort, he spoke about the same time, at a banquet of the

* To John H. Gourlie, Esq.

Williams College Alumni, on "Translators of Homer"; at a German fair, on the Franco-Prussian War; on Women and Peace, at a convention of women; and on Free-Trade, at a great meeting in Cooper Institute*; and he made the poetical translations for Mrs. Theresa Robinson's "Fifteen Years," besides writing the reminiscences referred to of Miss C. M. Sedgwick for her memoirs, prepared by Miss Mary Dewey. Other literary work was pressed upon him, but he was obliged to decline it, as shown in this letter:

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 21st:† I am glad to have the poems of Lowell and Tennyson, but besides that I have no leisure for the task. I am not sure that I am the man to pass a critical judgment upon them. Looking over Crabb Robinson's book, I find that Coleridge, in one of his letters, spoke contemptuously of Moore's 'Lallah Rookh,' and that Wordsworth, at a later day, declared himself unable to relish the poetry of his time. I doubt whether poets, if I may have the ambition to call myself one, are the proper judges of other men's poetry. I find, moreover, that, as I grow old, I do not take up a new book of poetry by a man of acknowledged genius with the eager curiosity that I once did, and run over its pages with a delighted enthusiasm. I am less sensible to beauties, and more easily offended by petty blemishes. less catholic in my tastes, and more inclined to reserve for old favorites that admiration which surrenders the whole soul to the mastery of the poet. You see my difficulties, therefore, but my want of time for the work you suggest is a sufficient reason for declining it.

"I looked over, some three or four years since, some of the poets now little read, and it struck me that I could say things of them which might possibly answer for a magazine. When I am a little less busy I may set down a few thoughts respecting one or two of them, and see whether you like them well enough to print them."‡

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* See "Orations and Addresses." D. Appleton & Co.

† To the Rev. E. E. Hale, who had asked him to write a review of poems by Tennyson and Lowell for "Old and New."

‡ He afterward wrote for Mr. Hale articles on Oldham's poems (1872), and on Cowley as a poet (1876), both of which will be probably included in his "Miscellanies."

About this time he was assisting the editors of a new anthology.* His work consisted simply in the revisal of their selections, rejecting some and suggesting others, and in writing a general introduction; but it took a good deal of care. His brief notes, on returning the proofs to the publishers, I have found of some interest, as hints of criticism and opinion, and they may not be wholly without it for the reader.

"NEW YORK, MAY 7th: I have looked over the second set of proofs sent me by you. I do not exactly like the poem 'To a Girl on her Thirteenth Year,' on account of the bad rhymes, nor am I quite pleased with Praed's 'I remember, I remember,' printed just after Hood's; it seems to me a little flippant, which is Praed's fault."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 2d: I send back the proofs with a suggestion that the poem of Mrs. Browning over which I have passed my pencil be omitted. It is one of her crudest, in expression and versification; the ideas seem to me inadequately expressed, on account of the difficulty presented by the rhyme. †

"I would suggest that more of the poems of Jones Very be inserted. I think them quite remarkable. There is also an American poet of whom no notice is taken, and who is one of our best, Richard H. Dana. His poems, 'The Husband and Wife's Grave,' 'The Pleasure Boat,' and the concluding lines of 'Thoughts on the Soul,' deserve insertion in any compilation.

"P. S.—Do not, I pray you, forget Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence,' the first canto of which is one of the most magnificent things in the language, and altogether free from the faults of style which deform Thomson's blank verse."

"Second Postscript.—In the department of religion is a cluster of hymns addressed to Jesus Christ as Supreme God, some of which are not remarkable as poems, yet I hesitated to strike out any save, I think, one. Please look at them, and see if any of them might be omitted. I send a copy of my Hymns, and would suggest the insertion of those which I have marked—two of them."

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* "Library of Poetry and Song." New York, Fords, Howard & Hurlburt, 1870.

† I do not know to which of Mrs. Browning's poems this refers.

"ROSLYN, JUNE 6th: I send you the poems relating to war, looked over. I have put among them a poem of mine entitled 'My Autumn Walk,' and I would suggest that a part of the last canto of Southey's 'Roderick, the last of the Goths,' be added, beginning with the line—

'With that he fell upon the old man's neck,'

and ending with the line—

'Scattering where'er they turned the affrighted ranks.'

I send also some extracts from Dana's poems. That entitled 'The Soul' might go under the head of 'Religion'; 'The Husband and Wife's Grave' under that of 'Death'; and 'The Pleasure Boat' somewhere else."

"NEW YORK, JUNE 13th: Under the head of 'Personal,' in the book, I think it would be well to insert the 'Epistle of Pope'—one of his very finest things—'to Harley, Earl of Oxford,' with a copy of Powell's poems."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 17th: I have made more suggestions for the omission of poems in the humorous department than in any other, several of them being deficient in the requisite literary merit. As to the convivial poems, the more I think of it the more I am inclined to advise their total omission. I think they will prejudice the success of the work. I send them all back."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 23d: I think 'Alectryon' a very beautiful poem. It is rather long, but that would not prevent me from advising its insertion in the collection, if I was quite sure that it was suitable for a book with the title of the one you are getting out, but I am not. 'The Old Admiral' should go in under the head of 'Patriotism,' I think, or better under that of 'Personal.' 'The Cavalry Song' will do well under 'Peace and War,' or 'Patriotism,' as you please, or as is convenient. The 'Door Step' is a poem of 'Love,' but it is pretty enough for anywhere. 'Pan in Wall Street' would shine among the humorous poems. In the 'Blameless Prince' is a fine poem entitled 'What the Winds Bring,' which would answer for the department of 'Childhood,' but could go under that of 'Nature,' as 'Betrothed Anew,' which properly belongs to the head of 'Marriage,' but would do for 'Nature' also.*

"As for Simms, I would suggest 'The Grape-Vine Swing,' 'The

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* These poems are by E. C. Stedman.

Mother and Child,' 'Come when the Evening Closes,' and 'The Shaded Water.'

"P. S.—Retain the poem of Emerson, if there is any particular reason in your mind for it. I marked it to be omitted, because I thought the idea imperfectly expressed, and would rather have had it in Emerson's prose.*

"There is a poem of Holmes's about Rip Van Winkle, Jr., in the 'Boston Medical Gazette,' which would do for the humorous department."

It might be supposed that Mr. Bryant had work enough for a man of seventy-six years of age; but the Iliad was scarcely printed when he wrote to his brother John (July 1st), announcing a new labor.

"I have begun the translation of the Odyssey, but I do not intend to hurry the task, nor even to translate with as much diligence as I translated the Iliad; so I may never finish it. But it will give me an occupation which will not be an irksome one, and will furnish me with a reason for declining other literary tasks, and a hundred engagements which I want some excuse besides old age for declining."

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* Most likely "Brahma," which Mr. Bryant once travestied in his journal.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOURTH.

THE ODYSSEY COMPLETED.

A. D. 1871.

MR. BRYANT'S life was now, as he had hoped it would be in one of his earlier poems,

"Journeying in long serenity away."

More than prosperous in his affairs, the possessor of a city home, and of two estates in the country, he devoted his mornings to translation or other literary work, and his afternoons to rambles, reading, and the conversation of friends. In the evenings he refrained from labor entirely, and was in bed at a timely hour. The earlier summer he passed at Roslyn, the later at Cummington, and the winters in New York. Writing to an acquaintance, who had inquired of him how he managed to maintain such uninterrupted health and activity at so advanced an age, he made this report of his habits:

"NEW YORK, MARCH 30th:* . . . I rise early, at this time of the year about half past five; in summer half an hour, or even an hour, earlier. Immediately, with very little encumbrance of clothing, I begin a series of exercises, for the most part designed to expand the chest, and at the same time call into action all the muscles and articulations of the body. These are performed with dumb-bells—the very lightest, covered with flannel—with a pole, a horizontal bar, and a light chair

* To Joseph H. Richards, Esq.

swung round my head. After a full hour, and sometimes more, passed in this manner, I bathe from head to foot. When at my place in the country I sometimes shorten my exercises in the chamber, and, going out, occupy myself in some work which requires brisk motion. After my bath, if breakfast be not ready, I sit down to my studies till I am called.

"My breakfast is a simple one—hominy and milk, or, in place of hominy, brown bread, or oatmeal, or wheaten grits, and, in the season, baked sweet apples. Buckwheat cakes I do not decline, nor any other article of vegetable food, but animal food I never take at breakfast. Tea and coffee I never touch at any time; sometimes I take a cup of chocolate, which has no narcotic effect, and agrees with me very well. At breakfast I often take fruit, either in its natural state or freshly stewed.

"After breakfast I occupy myself for a while with my studies; and when in town I walk down to the office of the 'Evening Post,' nearly three miles distant, and after about three hours return, always walking, whatever be the weather or the state of the streets. In the country I am engaged in my literary tasks till a feeling of weariness drives me out into the open air, and I go upon my farm or into the garden, and prune the fruit-trees or perform some other work about them which they need, and then go back to my books. I do not often drive out, preferring to walk.

"In the country I dine early, and it is only at that meal that I take either meat or fish, and of these but a moderate quantity, making my dinner mostly of vegetables. At the meal which is called tea I take only a little bread and butter, with fruit, if it be on the table. In town, where I dine later, I make but two meals a day. Fruit makes a considerable part of my diet, and I eat it at almost any hour of the day without inconvenience. My drink is water, yet I sometimes, though rarely, take a glass of wine. I am a natural temperance man, finding myself rather confused than exhilarated by wine. I never meddle with tobacco, except to quarrel with its use.

"That I may rise early, I, of course, go to bed early; in town as early as ten; in the country somewhat earlier. For many years I have avoided in the evening every kind of literary occupation which tasks the faculties, such as composition, even to the writing of letters, for the reason that it excites the nervous system and prevents sound

sleep. My brother told me not long since that he had seen in a Chicago newspaper, and several other western journals, a paragraph in which it was said that I am in the habit of taking quinine as a stimulant, that I have depended on the excitement it produces in writing my verses, and that, in consequence of using it in that way, I have become as deaf as a post. As to my deafness, you know that to be false; and the rest of the story is equally so. I abominate drugs and narcotics, and have always carefully avoided anything which spurs nature to exertions which it would not otherwise make. Even with my food I do not take the usual condiments, such as pepper and the like."

The translation of the Odyssey went on very steadily; early in March he had finished nine books; by the close of April the first volume, twelve books, was in the printer's hand; and before the close of the year the whole work was ready to be given to the public. This seems rapid work, but it was not careless work. Impatient as he was to get through with his task, he was never in a hurry. Nor did he allow it to seclude him from society, or to divert him from other literary occupations. During this year, in January, he addressed a crowded audience at the Academy of Music on the Establishment of Italian Unity; in May he spoke at the dinner given to the Joint High Commissioners, who had just concluded a treaty between Great Britain and the United States, on the Benefits of International Negotiations; the same month he spoke, at a dinner given to the German Ambassador, Baron von Gerolt, on the Progress of German Literature; again, the next month, he addressed an open-air meeting at the unveiling of the statue erected to his friend Morse in Central Park; and later on again he entertained the Alumni of Williams College with a witty comment on certain aspects of the Darwinian Theory.

The following extracts from his private letters bear more or less upon his studies and pursuits:

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 5th:* I was at the Century Club last night, and saw some very fine pictures, which are hung temporarily in

* To Miss J. Dewey.

its gallery, and to-day and to-morrow will be open to visitors who bring a card from any of the members. Among them is a beautiful scene on Lake George, by Kensett; another, of the plains of Colorado, with steep, splintered precipices overhanging them, and snowy mountains in sight, by Whittridge; and a spirited children's frolic, by Eastman Johnson, very characteristic and yet exceedingly graceful, as all his pictures are not. I wish you were here to look at them. Mr. David Dudley Field was there; he said he had been engaged in drawing up suggestions for an improved international code, in which, among other things, the practices of war, now so frightfully murderous, should be humanized, and the barbarity of bombardments should be renounced by the common consent of the civilized world. What a pity it is that Paris should ever have been fortified! Mr. Field told me that not many years since the people of Vienna petitioned the government to leave Vienna an open city, without fortifications.

"You often ask what books I have been reading. I have been occupied somewhat with James Freeman Clarke's 'Steps of Belief,' which is a good summary, stated in a popular manner, of the arguments for believing in a God, for being a Christian instead of a Deist, and a Protestant instead of a Catholic. These arguments are given with the greatest clearness, and considerable beauty, and the book ought to be well received by the public, especially the liberal part of the religious world. I have been looking over, also, the 'Life of St. Anselm,' the Abbot of Bec, in Normandy, who was a great thinker in his day—the eleventh century—and who made the idea of God an argument for his existence. The argument is referred to by Mr. Clarke. Besides these, I have begun to read Dr. Southwood Smith's book on the 'Divine Government,' which contains the arguments in favor of the universal restoration of all mankind to virtue and happiness—arguments which, I suppose, have influenced the belief of even the most orthodox in Germany, and led Dr. Bushnell to the compromise he puts forth — of a gradual diminution of sensibility to suffering, in the case of the wicked after death, attendant on a gradual weakening of the intellectual principle contained through endless ages."

"Boston, March 8th:* You may well suppose that I have not been in a state for the finer influences of poetry. The little that I

* From Richard H. Dana, Esq.

have been able to read of your translation* greatly pleases me for its simplicity, conciseness, clearness, and felicitous use of words. I do not see, for instance, how the often-attempted meeting of Hector and Andromache could be more tenderly and beautifully rendered, and among many:

> "'For I shall have no hope when thou art gone—
> Nothing but sorrow.'

Words right out of a foreboding, desolate heart; after the pause, 'Nothing but sorrow,' what an overflow of sadness in the last word here! Again, how splendid is Paris on his way from his 'lofty halls!' at the end of book sixth. By the way, can you think of any other word in the place of 'cord,' top of page 208? Hardly used in such a connection. And, in the next line, 'prances' suits not a horse loose, and all alive with his freedom. A little too dainty, and like something taught him while under the hand of his rider."

"NEW YORK, APRIL 7th:† It grieves me to say to you, as I must, that I cannot do for you what you ask, and that I am not to fill the honorable place in your volume that you designed for me. But I can no more get up the necessary excitement for writing a poem at the present time than I can go back to the days of my youth. I have the Odyssey on hand, which takes up most of my leisure; then there is the 'Evening Post,' which I cannot neglect, and other matters, small in themselves, but numerous, the effect of which is to load me with so many petty tasks, and keep me fussing so, that I sometimes feel what used to be called, when people had no scruple about using a Latin word now and then, *tedium vitæ*. So you see that you ask what is as impossible as if you were to wait a few years and ask it of my tombstone.

P. S.—I have a poem, written a few years since, which seemed to me a little languid. My daughter tells me that it will do, and I am about to add it, with some others, to the rest of my poems published by Appleton, to appear by and by in that collection. At her desire I have concluded to send it to you, which shall be done as soon as it is copied; not so much for publication as for your judgment. I shall

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* Of the Iliad.

† To James T. Fields, Esq.

be gratified if you prefer not to publish it, as I shall then be satisfied that my own judgment was right." *

"NEW YORK, APRIL 25th: † There was no need that you should exhort me to be diligent in putting the Odyssey into English blank verse. I have been as industrious as was reasonable. I understand very well that, at my time of life, such enterprises are apt to be brought to a conclusion before they are finished, and I have therefore wrought harder upon my task than some of my friends thought was well for me. I have already sent forward the manuscript for the first volume. You may remember that I finished my translation of the Iliad within the time that I undertook, and this would have been done without any urging. In the case of the Odyssey I have finished the first volume two months sooner than I promised. I do not think the Odyssey the better part of Homer, except morally. The gods set a better example, and take more care to see that wrong and injustice are discouraged among mankind. But there is not the same spirit and fire, nor the same vividness of description, and this the translator must feel as strongly as the reader. Let me correct what I have already said by adding that there is yet in the Odyssey one more advantage over the Iliad. It is better as a story. In the Iliad the plot is, to me, unsatisfactory; and there is, besides, a monotony of carnage—you get a surfeit of slaughter.

"The big sun-portrait of me which you saw at the French fair is from Sarony's, at No. 680 Broadway."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 19th: ‡ I thank you for thinking so much of me. I am not so far on with the second volume of the Odyssey as Mr. Fields seemed to suppose. My translation is only finished to near the middle of the fourteenth book. I do not feel quite so easy in this work as I did in translating the Iliad, for the thought that I am so old that I may be interrupted in my task before it is done rises in my mind now and then, and I work a little the more diligently for it, which perhaps is not well. As to my taking part in public matters, you, who know me well, will readily believe that I never seek occa-

* I am unable to discover what poem this was.

† To James T. Fields, Esq.

‡ To R. H. Dana, Esq.

sions to appear before the public; they are all put upon me. I would gladly have made over to somebody else the chance of saying something at the unveiling of Morse's statue, but it was impossible to do so, as I thought, without its being supposed that I was not willing to say a good word for an old friend.

"What you tell me of the Spiritualists is remarkable, but does not surprise me. They do not perceive the ridiculous side of their beliefs, and with the greatest gravity say things which strike those who are not initiated as the drollest things imaginable. But the most noteworthy thing is their readiness to believe—I mean the readiness of those who have been the most skeptical in regard to the Christian faith. Robert Owen was a remarkable example of this. After he became a Spiritualist he believed every alleged revelation coming from that quarter, no matter on whose authority. I regard all this as a testimony to the natural, instinctive desire of man to believe, on some evidence or other, in a life beyond the grave. If they will not believe it on the authority of the New Testament, they will snatch at anything else which satisfies this desire, however poor the substitute."

"ROSLYN, JULY 3d:* What a fearful experience poor France has had of late! Will her people be sure of a good government hereafter, under any form which it may take, till a generation shall arise which has been educated to the usages which in your country and mine reconcile political liberty with order and peace? I congratulate you on the settlement of the differences between the United States and your country. The treaty is popular here. Our domestic politics are not on so good a footing as we expected when we elected General Grant, but in one respect we shall improve them without being able to thank him for it—I mean in respect to freedom of trade, toward which public opinion is making rapid advances."

"ROSLYN, JULY 4th:† I congratulate you on having what you have long desired—a garden. The homely occupation of 'hoeing peas and thinning turnips,' of which you speak, will be relieved by occasionally looking at your flower-beds, breathing their perfumes,

* To Mr. F. E. Field, Esq., of England.
† To Miss C. Gibson, of Edinburgh.

and gathering occasional bouquets. I wish we had some other word instead of the French interloper *bouquet*. Pope says *nosegay*, but the word nose, which forms one half of this latter word, seems to me to vulgarize it somewhat, and it is owing to this, I think, that *bouquet* has come to be substituted for it. To me, however, *nosegays* are *nosegays* no longer. The great delight which I once took in the fragrance of flowers is with me little more than a memory, since my sense of smell, which was once acute—almost morbidly so—is now become very much deadened.*

"I have little to tell you in return for the news you give me of what you have been doing. This is a very quiet Fourth of July in these parts; people in their holiday dresses; men, women, and children are silently passing in the streets; the temperature is most agreeable; the sun is shaded by floating clouds; quails—the American quail—are whistling in the fields, calling out the familiar name, 'Bob White.' We have Dr. Dickson and his lady, of Philadelphia—most agreeable people—staying with us; he brimful of knowledge and literature, with a very delightful way of communicating his knowledge; and last night Mr. Tilden, whom you know, and Mr. George H. Hall, the clever painter of Spanish subjects, came from town to pass the Fourth of July with us. The Godwins have had the Swedish singer, Miss Nilsson, with them for some days, but that musical star is to suffer eclipse. She is to be married ere long to a Frenchman, Mr. Rouzaud, after which she will sing in public no more." †

"New York, July 15th: ‡ As I have finished another book of the Odyssey, I forward it to-day. But do not let your printers tread on my heels. It is disagreeable to be dunned for copy, and I cannot write as well when I have any vexation of that sort on my mind. In a day or two I will send a short preface for the first volume of the Odyssey. You are right in saying that no new one is wanted for the Iliad."

"Cummington, August 8th: § I thank you for remembering as you did the sad anniversary of the 27th of July—sad to us who re-

* Wordsworth experienced the same loss.
† This was a mistake, as we know.
‡ To J. R. Osgood, Esq.
§ To Miss J. Dewey.

main; joyful, no doubt, to her friends beyond the dark river. It is celebrated there, I doubt not, in a different manner, with floral decorations also, but with super-Miltonic hymns—poetry sublimated to a degree which this world knows not—and perchance with Lydian measures, trodden by airy feet on the ever-flowery lawns or in the ever-fresh myrtle bowers of Paradise.

"You often ask me what books I am reading. Homer, of course, and I am obliged to read him pretty carefully. But I brought with me Crook's 'History of English Literature and the English Language,' which I have been looking into. It is more lively and entertaining than Warton's 'History of English Poetry,' though there are several omissions, but, on the whole, it makes a pleasant book. I have also looked into Dr. Noah Porter's 'Books and Reading.' He is the president of Yale College, just elected with the general approbation of the learned and the unlearned. He is pretty liberal and catholic in his estimate of authors, but he is much afraid of Emerson, whose pantheism he regards as a form of atheism, and advises those, who in reading him find themselves getting astray, to lay him down forever."

"CUMMINGTON, AUGUST 9th:* Allow me, through you, to return my thanks to the Standing Committee of the Massachusetts Historical Society for affording me the opportunity of being present at the special meeting of the members to be held on the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Sir Walter Scott. My engagements will not allow me to attend the meeting, but I desire to take part in the general expression, which this anniversary will call forth, of admiration for his genius,

* To the Rev. R. C. Waterston. On the 15th of August, 1871, the Massachusetts Historical Society held a special meeting to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the birthday of Sir Walter Scott. The president, Robert C. Winthrop, presided, and opened the meeting with appropriate remarks. Addresses were made by Mr. Henry W. Longfellow, George S. Hillard, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Edmund Quincy. Robert C. Waterston placed before the members various interesting autograph papers in the handwriting of Sir Walter Scott. Among these may be mentioned a fragment of "Kenilworth" as originally written, with various alterations made by Sir Walter as it passed through the press. He mentioned also several characteristic personal anecdotes and reminiscences communicated to him in England and Scotland, from friends of Sir Walter Scott, which had never been made public. He concluded his remarks by reading the above letter from Mr. Bryant, who was an honorary member of the society.

and of gratitude to Providence for having raised up so nobly endowed an intellect to adorn the literature of the age. In the department of letters in which he achieved his highest fame, others have since arisen who by their writings have challenged the admiration of mankind, but none of the authors of these later years have displaced him from his high pre-eminence. The delighted astonishment with which the reading world received his works, one after another as they appeared, has subsided to a gentler emotion, but the calm wonder with which we now regard them is likely to last while the language in which he wrote shall endure."

"CUMMINGTON, SEPTEMBER 6th: * Here we have had a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Waterston, of Boston. Mr. Waterston preached on Sunday before last in the new house on the hill, yet unfinished, to a congregation of some fifty persons, assembled at a short notice—a sermon decidedly clever and well thought out, though extempore. The people were all highly delighted, and expressed themselves grateful for the treat he had given them. A few days afterward I saw Mr. Samuel, the orthodox minister in the West Village. He asked why I did not inform him that Mr. Waterston was here and would preach, as in that case he would have offered him his pulpit; and, when I said that I had not expected that, he remarked that he was not 'easily scared.'"

Of the incident referred to in this letter Mr. Waterston has given an account in his address to the Massachusetts Historical Society, which I am permitted to quote:

"There was one incident connected with our visit to Cummington so characteristic of Mr. Bryant, I am tempted to relate it.

"On Friday he said to me, as we were walking among the fields: 'It is my wish that on Sunday we should have religious services in the school-house. There is no church edifice near at hand, and the school-house will be just the place. I will spread the intelligence among the people, and they will gladly come.'

"I said that I had no written discourse with me, and was not sure

* To Miss J. Dewey.

that I should be able to meet the wants of the people thus called together. Mr. Bryant replied that no written discourse was needed, that the thought which would naturally present itself could be spoken, and that nothing could be better than to have the simple truths of Christianity brought directly home to the heart. In rejoining that I would cheerfully do whatever he desired, I may as well confess that I added, I did not so much mind speaking before the people as before him. 'Oh!' said he, with a sweet smile and a half reproving look, 'I should think you had known me long enough not to feel so. No one will welcome more heartily whatever may be said.' 'Make any arrangement you please,' I said, 'and I shall rejoice to be with you.'

"The next morning Mr. Bryant and his brother John left home for the school-house—a picturesque little building, and quite within sight. Here they were to make any needed preparation, and put things in order for the morrow. It was not long before they returned with a look of disappointment. Something baffled them. What it was they were rather reluctant to communicate. However, they soon made known the fact that the school-house would not answer. The desks were all fixtures, and were intended for young children. Any needed change was wholly impracticable. The impossibility of using that building for the purpose proposed was decisive. Our plans seemed to melt before us.

"So matters rested. Presently Mr. Bryant and his brother disappeared, and were no more seen through the whole morning. The poet might be deeply engaged over his translation of Homer. The battles of the Greeks were, perhaps, absorbing his mind. No; the two brothers were away from home—no one knew where. At length they returned, with an evident look of triumph. 'It is all right! We have arranged matters to our satisfaction!' Such were their exclamations. The 'Homestead,' where we were, was midway upon the hill. Some ways up, near to the summit of this elevation, Mr. Bryant was erecting a house for his son-in-law, Parke Godwin, and his family. The building was covered in, but not completed. Carpenters and mechanics were busily at work. The brothers had proceeded thither to investigate. Mr. Bryant was not ready to succumb. He had made up his mind to have a service; and a service there should be!

"Why not have it in this new building? The scene looked at present like a chaos, with a clutter of shavings and barrels and boards.

This did not matter. The workmen were ordered to clear the place. All hands were soon at work, and the brothers enjoyed it thoroughly. It seemed like old times. They were boys again. They worked with a will. The piles of chips and shavings speedily vanished; all rubbish was soon removed from the whole lower floor. Then the question was for seats. Boxes and barrels were arranged, and boards laid upon them in orderly rows; all this was extemporized in a masterly manner. Every difficulty was overcome, and in due time a most primitive place of worship was completed, reminding one of the Covenanters and the Puritans, though this was a cathedral compared to places where they often met. The scene around was certainly grand —the wide sweep of valleys and the vast amphitheatre of wooded hills.

"We now waited for the morrow, which soon came—a calm September morning. The population was widely scattered. There was no village in the immediate neighborhood. Simple farm-houses appeared here and there, humble homes under the shadow of spreading trees. Word had been spread from dwelling to dwelling, and farmers with their families were seen upon the way. Aged people were there with whom the journey of life had nearly ended, and little children in their Sunday clothes. Invalids, feeble and worn, who were seldom out, and mothers with their infants in their arms. Then there were strong sunburnt laborers and young men in the vigor of life. The new house was soon thronged. All the seats were occupied. Some of the young people were seated upon the stairs, and some stood by the open windows. Familiar hymns were sung to tunes in which all could unite. It was, in fact, a most touching and beautiful sight—thoroughly earnest and good. I doubt if the sun shone that day upon a truer or happier body of worshippers, and among them all, perhaps, no one enjoyed it more truly than Mr. Bryant.

"When the services were ended, there were friendly greetings. Mr. Bryant appeared like a father in the midst of his family. All wished and received a pleasant word or look, and evidently valued it as a patriarchal benediction. Thus closed an occasion not soon to be forgotten by any present."

"While at Cummington, being one morning alone with Mr. Bryant in his library, he said: 'Some of my brother's poems have great merit';

and taking up a copy of the volume from the table in which John had written, 'For the Old Homestead,' Mr. Bryant said: 'Let me read it to you.' He began one of the poems, but before proceeding far his voice became tremulous; more and more he was overcome by emotion, until, no longer able to read, he handed me the book, saying: 'Excuse me—I cannot go on—please read it yourself.'

"Under a calm and unimpassioned manner, there were in Mr. Bryant's nature hidden depths of feeling; and this tribute to his brother has often come to my recollection, as an instance of his own sensibility, and a proof of the strong bond which united the brothers."

Professor J. B. Thayer, of Cambridge, one of the many scholars who concerned themselves with the poet's version of Homer, and who proffered him what assistance they could render, sometimes by careful reviews in the journals, and sometimes by private notes, pointed out to him two omissions in the Odyssey, which he acknowledged in this wise:

"CUMMINGTON, SEPTEMBER 12th: I thank you for the trouble which you have so kindly taken in communicating the fact of the two omissions I have made of passages in the Odyssey, leaving them untranslated. The omissions were accidental, certainly. I have not the first volume of the Greek here to verify them, and shall be obliged to postpone repairing my fault till I return to New York and Roslyn. It vexed me very much that I should have been guilty of this blunder. I thought that I was very exact, and had taken great pains to avoid such accidents, but the truth is, that I was always in danger of making blunders of one sort or another from my youth up.

"I am glad that your general opinion of the work is so favorable. I have tried to make the translation readable, and not wholly to lose one characteristic of Homer—that of being a good story-teller.

"Meantime, I shall very thankfully receive any suggestions which it may occur to you to make, as you are looking over my translation. It cannot but have faults, I am certain. It has been with me a solitary task. I have not consulted a living soul in regard to the reading of a single line or even word in it, and it is all the more likely to be faulty on that account. I hope I have not omitted any other passages than those you have done me the favor to mention."

Professor Thayer prepared a careful criticism of the Odyssey for a Boston journal, which the poet prized. He spoke of it in a letter thus:

"ROSLYN, OCTOBER 3d: I have your criticism of my work in the Boston 'Daily Advertiser.' You treat my version of the Odyssey very tenderly, and I am glad that you found in it so much to commend, besides owing you so many thanks for commending it with so little reserve. In the particular of vivacity, which you hint might have been attained in a greater degree by a careful attention to the effect and force of the particles in the original Greek, it is very likely that one more familiar with the niceties of that language than I am might have been more successful in transferring their import in some way to our language; but I found an obstacle in my way—the necessity of adopting paraphrases, which seemed to me difficult to reconcile with the Homeric rapidity of narrative.

"I shall be glad at any time to receive the suggestions of which you speak, and which I am sure will be valuable."

Encouraged by the wish intimated at the close of this note, Professor Thayer was at the pains of comparing the translation, almost word by word, with the original, and he sent to Mr. Bryant the results of his collation in a clearly written manuscript of ten or fifteen pages. The corrections were mostly verbal, derived from a minuter knowledge of modern Homeric learning than Mr. Bryant possessed, but in no case, as far I am able to judge, affecting essentially his conception of his author's meaning. To this kindness Mr. Bryant replied as follows:

"NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27th: I should have thanked you before this for your manuscript of suggestions relating to my translation of the Odyssey, but I have been so busy with the work as almost to neglect everything else. When I am more at leisure I shall sit down to see what can be done to mend my lines according to the lights you have given me. Your animadversions seem to me very valuable, and you have laid me under a real obligation."

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 20th:* The death of your brother (Edwin Field), a man of such high and noble aims, so able, so active, so public-spirited, and singularly energetic and efficient in whatever he undertook, is a public calamity. Those who knew him in this country feel that, although it is England that loses in him one of her most useful citizens, no such man can pass away without his loss being felt by the civilized world, since nothing can be done for the good of the human race in any country without the world at large being in some way the better for it—by the influence of example, at least, if nothing more. As for myself, I have been so much in the habit of connecting my idea of him with my visits to your country, when so many years of activity were apparently before him. I was deeply touched by the testimony, so warmly expressed, which your wife in her letter to my daughter bore to your brother's worth. The consolation of his friends under this calamity lies in the reflection that his life, up to the moment of its close, was crowded with good deeds and useful services. That it was so prematurely closed we know the appointment of a wisdom which we cannot question. Measured by the good he did, his life was a long one—longer than that of thousands who have died of old age."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 7th:† I have sent you by mail the twenty-fourth and concluding book of my translation of Homer's Odyssey, together with the table of contents for the second volume." ‡

At the close of his six years' task, when the entire work was laid before the public, the critics were prompt and voluble in their discussions of its merits. Mr. Matthew Arnold's lectures at Oxford, on Translating Homer, published a few years be-

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* To Alfred Field, Esq., of Leamington, England.

† To Messrs. J. R. Osgood & Co.

‡ Mr. Bryant could well have added to this bald announcement the beautiful words with which Cowper closed the first preface to his Homer, seventy years before: "And now I have only to regret that my pleasant work is ended. To the illustrious Greek I owe the smooth and easy flight of many thousand hours. He has been my companion at home and abroad, in the study, in the garden, and in the field; and no measure of success, let my labors succeed as they may, will ever compensate to me the loss of the innocent luxury that I have enjoyed as a translator of Homer."

fore,* had just given unusual life to the old controversy, not yet closed, as to the proper aims and methods of translation, and raised questions which periodical writers were pleased to toss about among themselves like so many balls. It is not quite certain that Mr. Bryant ever read these lectures, or the dissertations built upon them, as none of them are to be found in his library, while he was not in the habit of reading the foreign magazines; but it is curious to remark how, writing as he did, not for scholars, as Mr. Arnold requires, but for the general educated public, he should have complied practically, and as if by instinct, in the more important points, with the theoretic instructions given out by the eminent English authority. He did not trouble himself with any of the questions raised in the schools of Homeric controversy; nor transport modern sentiment into the old Greek world; nor endeavor to construct a special vocabulary in order to convey to English readers the archaic character of the original. His words are the ordinary, yet choicest, words of good poetic composition. At the same time he seems to have been penetrated, as the greater number of critics acknowledge, with a deep sense of the four great qualities which Mr. Arnold describes as distinctively the qualities of Homer—rapidity of narrative, plainness and directness both of thought and of style, and uniform nobleness of manner, even when the subject is not in itself noble. In one or another of these respects Mr. Arnold alleges that all the foregoing translations have failed. Cowper and Wright have not attained Homer's rapidity; Pope and Southey have none of his simplicity of diction; Chapman none of his directness of thought; while Newman and the balladists in general are deficient in his nobleness.

In the choice of a metre, however, Mr. Bryant ran counter to the recommendations of the Oxford professor; and any one, I think, who attentively considers the subject, will be disposed to commend his choice. The difficulties of the trans-

* "Essays in Criticism," Macmillan & Co., New York.

lator arise from the fact, so often dwelt upon by writers on language, that, although we employ, for the want of proper native terms, the Greek and Latin designations of feet and measures, we really have no such feet and measures. Our modern accentual rhythm is in no sense the equivalent of the ancient temporal prosody.* It is merely representative, and, like other representatives, far from a faithful expression of the model which it is supposed to reproduce. For this reason, as Professor Marsh observes, "every attempt to naturalize the classical metres in English verse has proved a palpable failure, and is, in fact, a delusion, because, from the want of parity between accent and quantity, they cannot strike the ear alike, and therefore the eye alone, or the fingers which count off the feet, can find any resemblance between the ancient metre and the modern." Translators of Homer are consequently shut up to a choice of the few forms that are deemed the fittest representatives of the majestic movement of his song—which are the heroic rhymed couplet, the Spenserian stanza, the old ballad measures, the English hexameter, and blank verse.

Rhyme Mr. Bryant discarded, because, as he says, it offered a constant temptation to petty infidelities (he might have said to gross infidelities), and to the employment of expressions which have an air of constraint and do not adequately convey the thought. Cowper, who had long before him experienced the same difficulty, remarks, in his Preface, that "a just translation of any ancient poet in rhyme is impossible. No human ingenuity can be equal to the task of closing every couplet with sounds homotonous, expressing at the same time the full sense, and only the full sense, of the original." Accordingly, while he gives ample praise to Pope for his correct and elegant language and poetical diction, he condemns his many deviations from the original compelled by the fetters of rhyme he

* See Dr. Marsh's learned discussion in his "Lectures on the English Language," p. 520. Scribner, New York, 1861.

had imposed upon himself. It was all very fine, as Bentley said, but not Homer. Nor have the successors of Pope in the same attempt—Sotheby, Wright, and others—been any more successful. They have furnished us with poems of merit in many aspects, but not the poem of the old Greeks. A few specimens of rhymed translation given by Mr. Frere * are more faithful, and at the same time pleasing to the ear, than any others that I have seen, but it is doubtful whether these qualities could have been maintained throughout a voluminous work. The recurring rhyme becomes monotonous in long narratives, and it is almost impossible to avoid the air of constraint of which Mr. Bryant speaks. †

So the ballad metre, in skilful hands, may be made agreeable for a little while, but it is only necessary to read the Homeric versions of Professors Blackie and Newman, which have many excellences, to discover what an intolerable singsong it gets to be when it is extended to any great length. Besides, our English ballads, though they may contain pathetic or even sublime touches here and there, are for the most part associated with low and ignoble subjects. No poet of the English tongue has yet been able to lift them into dignity, or to make them the vehicle of a grand and sustained inspiration. Their defects—in the several forms adopted by Chapman, by Dr. Maginn, and by Professor Newman—are so convincingly argued by Arnold, and the reasons of these defects so clearly shown by Marsh, that it is needless here to repeat their expositions.

Mr. Arnold, Mr. Thayer, and others unite in the opinion that the English hexameter is the best representative of the Homeric movement, although it has never got itself introduced into general use, or become, in any use of it, a favorite measure. Robert Southey, who was certainly a master of versifica-

* "Works of J. Hookham Frere," vol. ii, p. 271. New York, Denham & Co., 1874.

† The objections to the single rhyme apply with still more force to a complicated system of rhymes, as in the Spenserian stanza.

tion, made an elaborate attempt to construct, as he says, an English metre in imitation of the ancient hexameter, "which would be perfectly consistent with the character of our language, and capable of great richness, variety, and strength"; but it may still be said of his "Vision of Judgment," as Thomas Nash, quoted by him, said of similar efforts in the days of Spenser, "The hexameter verse I grant to be a gentleman of an ancient house (so is many an English beggar); yet this clime of ours he cannot thrive in; our speech is too craggy for him to set his plough in; he goes twitching and hopping like a man running upon quagmires, up the hill in one syllable, and down the hill in another, retaining no part of that strictly smooth gait which he vaunts himself with among the Greeks and Latins."*

The finest specimens in this kind are to be found in Arthur Clough's "Bothie" and Longfellow's "Evangeline," and yet Mr. Arnold himself confesses, while allowing the merits of both these poems, that the former is rough and irregular, and the latter, in spite of a certain tender elegance, often lumbering. Mr. Arnold's own few examples,† carefully as they are executed, are scarcely to be admired. Without saying of them what Landor says of the hexameter in general, that it sounds like a heavy cart rolling over bowlders, we may remark that they nevertheless recall Landor's other criticism, that this kind of versification is, at the best, a hybrid.

"Porson was askt what he thought of hexameters written in English:
'Show me,' said he, 'any five in continuance true to the metre,'
Five where a dactyl has felt no long syllable puncht through his midriff,
Where not a trochee or pyrrhic has stood on one leg at the entrance,
Like a gray fatherly crane keeping watch in the marshes of Caysta.

* See the discussion in Southey's Preface to the "Vision of Judgment."

† "Essays in Criticism," by Matthew Arnold. New York, Macmillan & Co., 1880.

Zounds, how they hop, skip, and jump! Old Homer, uplifting his eyebrows,
Cries to the somnolent Gods—Oh, ye blessed, who dwell in Olympus," etc., etc. *

Mr. Bryant made trial of the hexameter, but was not satisfied with what he was able to do; his versions in that metre of the visit of Ulysses to Calypso's grot, and of other passages, show considerable ease in the handling, but they fall below his versions of the same passages in blank verse, which he definitively adopted. That measure, as it has been written by Shakespeare, the old dramatists, Milton, Wordsworth, Landor, Tennyson, and Mr. Bryant himself, though it does not adequately convey the movement of Homer, is yet in itself so free, full, musical, and grand, lending itself alike to the most graceful and imposing narrative, and to the most delicate as well as intense utterances of passion, that, until the hexameter has attained a flexibility and fluency it has not yet reached, must be our noblest vehicle for the rendering of the Grecian epic.†

On another point—the employment of Roman mythological names—Mr. Bryant's decision admits of greater doubt. His defence of it, in the preface to the Odyssey, is perhaps more plausible than convincing. He remarks:

"The names I have employed have been given to the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece from the very beginnings of our language. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the rest, down to Procter and Keats — a list whose chronology extends through six hundred years—have followed this usage, and we may even trace it back for centuries before either of them wrote. Our prose writers have done the same thing; the names of Latin derivation have been adopted by

* "Landor's Works," vol. v, p. 346. London, Chapman & Hall, 1876.

† "Take our blank verse," says Southey, "in all its gradations, from the elaborate rhythm of Milton down to its loosest structure in the early dramatists, and I believe there is no measure comparable to it, either in our own or any other language, for might and majesty, and flexibility and compass."

the earliest and latest translators of the New Testament. To each of the deities known by these names there is annexed in the mind of the English reader—and it is for the English reader that I have made this translation—a peculiar set of attributes. Speak of Juno and Diana, and the mere English reader understands you at once; but, when he reads the names of Hera and Artemis, he looks into his classical dictionary. The names of Latin origin are naturalized; the others are aliens and strangers. The conjunction *and* itself, which has been handed down to us *un*changed from our Saxon ancestors, holds not its place in our language by a firmer and more incontestable title than the names which we have hitherto given to the deities of ancient Greece. We derive this usage from the Latin authors—from Virgil, and Horace, and Ovid, and the prose writers of ancient Rome. Art as well as poetry knows these deities by the same names. We talk of the Venus de' Medici, the Venus of Milo, the Jupiter of Phidias, and never think of calling a statue of Mars a statue of Ares."

This is forcibly said, and would be conclusive but for the consideration that the Homeric world of gods is as much a world of its own as its world of human characters. Its deities are not those of Greece precisely, and still less those of Rome. Zeus is by no means Jove—nor Hera, Juno—nor Artemis, Diana. They are themselves. They may have analogous functions in their respective hierarchies, but still they are not the same: they are not only not the same, but often quite different. In Homer particularly each one possesses a sharply defined individuality, as much so as Achilles, or Hector, or Odysseus, who are all heroes, but heroes of a separate and marked type. They all live the life of men—with the passions and foibles of men—eating, drinking, wrangling, cheating like men, but each one has his peculiar authority, and each one exercises it in his own peculiar way. To identify them, therefore, with the more mysterious and awful divinities of Roman faith, is, to a certain extent, to introduce confusion into that great "orb" of Homeric creation which ought to be allowed to roll by itself through space.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIFTH.

A JOURNEY TO MEXICO.

A. D. 1872, 1873.

As soon as the Homer was before the public, Mr. Bryant indulged himself in the recreation of a visit to the Bahamas, Cuba, and Mexico. Accompanied by his brother John, his younger daughter, his niece, and Mr. John Durand, a former companion of travel, he departed, on the 25th of January, for Nassau,* where he passed two weeks, and thence went to Ha-

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* Among the papers which Mr. Bryant left at this time unfinished upon his table at Roslyn was the following sketch of a poem, which may be called

A MEMORY.

"The morn hath not the glory that it wore,
Nor doth the day so beautifully die,
Since I can call thee to my side no more,
To gaze upon the sky.

"For thy dear hand, with each return of Spring,
I sought in sunny nooks the flowers she gave;
I seek them still, and sorrowfully bring
The choicest to thy grave.

"Here, where I sit alone, is sometimes heard,
From the great world, a whisper of my name,
Joined, haply, to some kind, commending word,
By those whose praise is fame.

"And then, as if I thought thou still wert nigh,
I turn me, half forgetting thou art dead,
To read the gentle gladness in thine eye,
That once I might have read.

vana, where, after a week's stay, receiving attentions from the Governor-General of the island and other distinguished residents, he left his ladies, and sailed for Vera Cruz. His arrival at that port (February 27th) was hospitably anticipated by Mr. Romero, whom he had formerly known as the Mexican Minister to the United States, and who, as a member of Juarez's Cabinet, kindly placed at his disposal every facility of travel. He passed directly from Vera Cruz to the capital, partly by diligence and partly by railroad, reaching his destination on the 29th. His itinerary and letters to the "Evening Post" show him busily occupied, day by day, in visits to many places of interest —the cathedrals, the schools, the government archives—where he inspected the early records of the history of California, Texas, and New Mexico—the fortresses and the lakes, the plantations and factories, and in accepting the attentions proffered him by various persons of local repute. Among the honors conferred upon him was that of honorary membership of the

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"I turn, but see thee not; before my eyes
The image of a hillside mound appears,
Where all of thee that passed not to the skies
Was laid with bitter tears.

"And I, whose thoughts go back to happier days,
That fled with thee, would gladly now resign
All that the world can give of fame and praise,
For one sweet look of thine.

"Thus, ever, when I read of generous deeds,
Such words as thou didst once delight to hear,
My heart is wrung with anguish as it bleeds
To think thou art not near.

"And now that I can talk no more with thee
Of ancient friends and days too fair to last,
A bitterness blends with the memory
Of all that happy past.

"Oh, when I———"

"ROSLYN, 1873."

At this time Mrs. Bryant had been dead seven years.

Geographical and Statistical Society, which also gave him a formal reception. "The meeting was numerous and choice," says the French paper of the place, the "Trait d'Union." "Mr. Balcarcel, the Minister *de fomento*, presided, and among the assistants were Mr. Nelson, United States Minister; Mr. Tejada, Spanish Minister; Messrs. Ignacio Ramirez, Juan de la Garza, and Ignacio Altamirano, Judges of the Supreme Court; Messrs. Aspiroz and Diaz Covarrubias, Oficiales Mayores of the Departments of Fomento and Relaciones; Messrs. Mata, Prieto, and Payno, distinguished authors; Messrs. Skilton and Benecke, United States and German Consuls; Mr. F. L. Plumb, formerly United States *Chargé ad interim*, and a large number of deputies, literatos, periodistas, and men of science."

Mr. Bryant, accompanied by Mr. William H. Hurlburt, a distinguished journalist of New York, who happened to be in Mexico, was addressed by the President, and replied "half in Spanish and half in English," says the paper just cited, "and the auditory was surprised, in the Spanish part of the discourse, by his happy choice of expressions and the purity of his pronunciation." The Spanish paper also—"El Correo del Comercio"—complimented his "clear, sonorous, and magnificent Castilian." But the truth was that he merely apologized in Spanish for using his native tongue, and made the greater part of his discourse in English, as follows:

"MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE SOCIETY: I do not speak with sufficient ease the noble idiom of this country to venture upon answering, in bad Castilian, the obliging and eloquent words which I have just heard, and you will therefore pardon me if I have recourse to the less melodious but still expressive language which I learned in my cradle.

"Your society, although it acknowledges a common bond of union between all liberal studies, and gathers its members from every field of learning and science, yet indicates by its name its patriotic purpose. One of its main objects—indeed, its principal declared object—is to cultivate a familiar, accurate, and intimate acquaintaince with the

configuration, the resources, and the condition of every part of the Mexican Republic. From this naturally results a zeal for preserving the integrity of the Mexican territory, in which I cannot but sympathize. For, gentlemen, you have a noble country—broad valleys of inexhaustible fertility, lying in the friendly shelter of lofty mountains —regions over which broods a climate of perpetual spring—districts which bear the harvests of the temperate zones lying beside others in which more powerful suns ripen the fruits of the tropics. Your soil hides also in its bosom rich ores of the precious and useful metals. Of the two races by which it is inhabited, one, derived from the Old World, was at one time renowned for the extent and the boldness of its enterprises and the grandeur of its empire. The other, a growth of our own hemisphere, had, before the discovery of this New World, lifted itself in civilization and the arts of life far above any of the other tribes of the American continent. Most willingly do I take these facts of their history as an omen of their future prosperity, as assurances of what this nation, seated among these fertile valleys, will yet become, in greatness and renown, when its internal peace shall be permanently established, and the rights of persons and property placed beyond the reach of violation. It is yours, gentlemen, to co-operate in this great work, and I am most happy to be adopted into an association composed of men so eminent and enlightened and intrusted with so noble a mission. For this you will please to receive my most hearty thanks."

He remained a fortnight in the capital, going to Chapultepec, Tacubaya, Las Vegas, and other places, and then returned leisurely by way of Puebla, the pyramids of Cholula, and Orizaba, to the coast. His journey among the imposing mountains and beautiful valleys of the higher regions was one of incessant delight. As Mr. Romero had taken the precaution to furnish his party with a military escort, they had no fear of the robber gangs that often infested the highways, and were everywhere received by natives, as well as by temporary residents, English and American, with abounding hospitality.

"We believe that no foreigner," says "The Two Republics" of March 15th, "ever was the subject, in this capital, of a warmer, a more

sincere, and elegant reception than Mr. Bryant has been during his brief sojourn. He came with no official rank or titles, with none of the prestige of a great politician, able to affect the 'balance of power' on this continent. To no extrinsic influences can be attributed the honors and hospitality which were so lavishly conferred upon him. They were the spontaneous outpourings of a grateful people, who never forget an act of kindness and justice, and who had not forgotten that, when Mexico was friendless, Mr. Bryant became her friend. They were the responsive echoes of the gifted and talented of the land, who appreciated his lofty genius; they were the tokens of the admiration of high talents and noble inspirations, entertained by our society.

"Mr. Bryant was received by President Juarez most graciously, and in the spirit of warmest friendship. The several ministers visited him, and showed him the kindest attentions. He received tributes from various literary and scientific associations, and distinguished members of the *literati;* he was breakfasted, dined, and *obsequied* daily by the most eminent members of society, leaving him hardly sufficient time to visit the numerous notable and historical objects with which this capital abounds. Mr. Bryant enjoyed excellent health during these rounds of courtesies, and left the ancient capital of the Aztecs in a state of rapture with the people, its historic objects, and lovely climate.

"We append below a note received from Mr. Bryant on the eve of his departure, which expresses, though in brief terms, fully and forcibly, his sentiments in relation to his recent visit.

"'MEXICO, HOTEL ITURBIDE, *March* 12, 1872.

"'MY DEAR SIR: I send you, as you have requested, for your journal, a memorandum of what I said at the meeting of the Geographical Society. I leave this interesting city, where I have received so much kindness, with a sense of regret that I have not been able to study more at leisure its political and social condition and its other peculiarities. I leave it with gratitude for its hospitalities, with reverence for its enlightened men, and with the warmest wishes for the prosperity of the nation of which it is the capital.

"'I am, sir, very truly yours,

"'W. C. BRYANT.

"'Major GEORGE W. CLARKE.'"

The travellers came back by way of Havana and New Orleans, and were at home before the end of April.

Mr. Bryant found his own country in the throes of a Presidential election; and, though he mingled little in the politics of the time, he had become so dissatisfied with the administration of General Grant that he consented to take part with other Republicans in an independent movement. When, however, their convention at Cincinnati, misled, it is said, by the politicians, proceeded to nominate as its candidate for the Presidency, Mr. Horace Greeley, an eminent but eccentric journalist, he could not approve its action, and gave a reluctant support to General Grant, as the less of two evils. He had been engaged in so many controversies with Mr. Greeley, on the most important and fundamental points of political theory and practice, that it would have been the grossest of inconsistencies in him to maintain the aspirations of the latter to the highest executive office in the nation. When, more lately, Mr. Greeley was taken up by the Democratic party, of which for years he had been an unrelenting enemy, Mr. Bryant was all the more assured of the wisdom of his decision. Writing to the Rev. Dr. Powers, of Chicago, June 12th, he said:

"You are quite right in placing the nomination of Horace Greeley as President of the United States among the strange vagaries of the times. I should, at any time beforehand, have said that the thing was utterly impossible—that it could not be done by men in their senses. But it is a fact that bodies of men as well as individuals sometimes lose their wits, and that the average reason of a large assembly is sometimes sheer insanity. It is certain that another candidate will be proposed to be supported by those who can neither support Grant nor Greeley."

Several journals having suggested Mr. Bryant himself as a candidate, he put an end at once to that nonsense, as he deemed it, by the following card:

"Certain journals of this city have lately spoken of me as one ambitious of being nominated as a candidate for the Presidency of the

United States. The idea is absurd enough, not only on account of my advanced age, but of my unfitness in various respects for the labor of so eminent a post. I do not, however, object to the discussion of my deficiencies on any other ground than that it is altogether superfluous, since it is impossible that I should receive any formal nomination, and equally impossible, if it were offered, that I should commit the folly of accepting it. WILLIAM C. BRYANT.

"NEW YORK, *July* 8, 1872."

He was far more inclined to be at his home in Cummington than in the arena of party strife, for he had projected a benefaction to his native town, which enlisted his deepest interest. The nature of it may be learned from this letter to his brother John of June 17th and 25th. He says:

"I have a site for the library. Mr. Dawes has bought for me the Holmes lot of which I spoke in my last letter—eleven acres for three hundred and fifty dollars—and I have this morning sent him a check for the amount. . . . I have bought already two thousand dollars' worth of books, a circulating library of six hundred and ninety volumes in excellent order, and about a thousand volumes besides. In addition, I have empowered Mr. Putnam, the publisher, to purchase in England, whither he is to go in July, two thousand dollars' worth of good books, at second hand, so that I shall probably have between three and four thousand volumes by autumn. This will be all that I expect to buy. . . . This is a glorious season, charming weather, frequent showers, large promise of fruit; all the crops flourish."

This library was completed in due time, and given to the town—a handsome stone structure, containing more than six thousand volumes, and furnishing to the three or four hundred families of the hills an ample store of amusement and instruction during the long winter nights.

Mr. Bryant's brothers, Arthur and John, old men like him, though not so old as himself, were now his almost constant companions in the summer-time, and it was delightful to see the three venerable men—"the Bryant boys," some of the neighbors called them—with their white beards and in white

summer dresses, trudging over the fields and through the forests, searching for the favorite haunts of their youth. As they emerged from the shadows of the trees, a stranger might easily have taken them for the Druids of an olden time come back to revive the vanished worship of the woods. Devout lovers of nature, accomplished botanists and ornithologists, experienced in the ways of the world, and actors in them to some extent; two of them writers of verse, and all of them familiar with the best verse that English genius had written, which they could quote at will—they never wanted for conversation; yet their principal talk related to the things and events of early life. "Once," said brother John, "in walking with him, we came to a blacksmith shop beside a brook. 'Here,' he said, 'when I was six years old, I was sent with a horse to get him shod. While waiting for the job I wandered off up the channel of this brook and came to a place where the water poured over a rock, making a beautiful cascade, the first thing of the kind I had ever seen on so large a scale. Suppose we go that way, and see if we can find it.' We did as suggested; went up the ravine, thickly shaded with tall trees, passing several pretty water-falls, but he recognized none as the one he remembered to have seen when a child. We finally gave up the search for that day, and walked homeward. The next morning my brother said: 'John, I have been thinking more about that water-fall, and I now remember all about it. The stream fell over a rock some fifteen or twenty feet high, and there was a deep basin of very clear water below it. I remember, also, that there was a round hole in the rock, full of water, and I wondered if it had any bottom, and I got a stick to measure its depth; I must take another look, for I know I cannot be mistaken about it.' This we did a few days after. Passing up the valley of the brook, as before, we made our way through tangled thickets, clambered over rocks, and, about forty rods beyond where we before went, came to the cascade, with the pool of clear water and the hole in the rock, as he remembered to have seen it seventy years before.

I mention this not so much as a case of remarkable recollection as to show that even at the tender age of six years he had an eye to appreciate the beautiful in nature, and was possessed of a passion to explore the secrets of the unfrequented streams and forests of his native hills. . . .

"There is not a stream or forest, mountain-gorge or hill-top, for miles around the old homestead in Cummington, that has not felt the pressure of his footstep some time during the last seven years. Only the last summer these explorations were pursued with as much zeal, and apparent vigor and delight, as at any previous time.

"His recollection of recent events, it seems to me, is quite unusual for a person of his age. One day last August, as I was walking with him on an unfrequented road, two or three miles from the homestead, he said: 'This is where we found that strange, pretty flower, when we were along here last year.' Walking on a few steps, he exclaimed, 'Here it is,' and at the same time stooped to pluck one. He still takes his walks daily, unless the weather is too inclement for any prudent person to be abroad. Within three years I have known him to walk as far as eighteen miles in a day, much of the distance over rugged, steep hills; and his daughter writes me that within the last week he has walked eleven miles at a stretch without incurring much fatigue. I went with him, last September, to visit the family of Dr. Dewey, at Sheffield, Massachusetts. After dinner the doctor took a nap, and my brother proposed, meantime, to show me some of the lovely scenery of the neighborhood, with which he was acquainted. We walked about a mile north, then west about as far, passing a pretty pond of clear water and a picturesque mill, shaded by large cottonwood-trees. Then turning south, we walked on a long distance, until I began to fear we might not find a road leading back to the village. And besides, the day was sultry and the road dusty. I therefore asked my brother if we had not better take a short cut across the fields to the place whence we set out, as we could see the church-spires in the

distance. The reply was, 'If you are tired, we will do so; if not, I am for going on.' Of course, I was not going to own that I was tired in those circumstances, and so we continued for some miles farther." *

He was not disposed, however, to engage in new enterprises, and, in response to an invitation to lecture in Boston, he answered as follows:

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 30, 1873: † For one of the best of reasons I cannot do what you request in such kind and flattering terms. I am about to make a journey to the Southern States. We old men are like snakes—fond of the sun, and inclined to crawl into sunny places. I must go before the date mentioned in your letter. But, besides this reason, I have yet another difficulty.

"I have been often asked to deliver public lectures, and I always answer that I never do it. I sometimes make little dinner speeches, and now and then speak at public meetings, when some important matter is up for discussion, but I never give lectures. I cannot well afford to deprive myself of so short and easy an answer to such applications as I have mentioned. And then I do not like the idea of coming before a strange audience—and a *Boston* audience. The people of New York are accustomed to my defects as a speaker, and bear with me. I could not expect from Boston the same indulgence."

This letter speaks of his brief speeches, and I find that, in the course of the time included in this chapter, he had made a dozen or more of them—in behalf of the Home for Incurables, of the Children's Aid Society, on Municipal Reform at a great popular meeting in Cooper Institute, for the opening of the new Princeton Library, at the unveiling of the statue of Shakespeare in Central Park for his English friends, and at the erection of a statue to Sir Walter Scott for his Scotch friends, besides remarks at the Burns dinner, the dinner to Salvini the actor, and elsewhere. ‡ On all occasions he spoke

* From an address made at Chicago in 1874.

† To James T. Fields, Esq.

‡ Most of these are contained in his volume of "Orations and Addresses."

briefly, but with unusual discernment, of the few right things to be said, and of the best manner of saying them. Of the address on Scott, he gave to one of his correspondents (Miss Dewey) this account:

"As you ask for my address at the unveiling of the statue of Scott, I send it enclosed. The day when the ceremony took place was fine; the concourse large—six or seven thousand persons on the ground; a regiment of bare-kneed Highlanders, with each a feather in his cap; and kilted pipers, twice the number that King Cole had, marching round the Scott statue, and emitting the loud pibroch from their bagpipes. The arrangement of the audience was not good, and very few, I think, could have heard what was said on the platform."

During the winter of 1872–'73 he amused himself in collecting—not of his own motion, but at the urgent request of Mr. Putnam, the publisher—an edition of his orations and speeches, which Putnam thought of too great historical interest and merit in themselves to be allowed to slumber in forgetfulness in the columns of newspapers. Mr. Bryant was never sanguine of the success of his own productions; but he was glad to learn that these simple and unpretending performances found some warm admirers. Mr. James T. Fields wrote him, with some enthusiasm, that they were "the most beautiful speeches in the English language," and he replied in this modest way:

"Roslyn, July 2, 1873: I am glad that you are able to speak kindly of my book of orations and addresses, although I feel that it would be presumption in me to accept as my due all that you are so good natured as to say concerning it. Your commendations encourage me to believe that I have not committed a folly in gathering these compositions into a volume."

"New York, January 6th:* You and yours may be assured of our deep and sincere sympathy in the sorrows which it has pleased

* To Miss C. Gibson, of Edinburgh.

Providence to send upon you. Here, too, the closing days of the year (1872) have been saddened by the deaths of those whom we much prized, suddenly removed in the midst of their usefulness—Kensett, the amiable and generous artist; Putnam, the liberal-minded and kindly bookseller, and the promoter of every good work; and the much-esteemed treasurer of the Century Association, Priestley, a man of great worth and intelligence. It is not often that we lose, so near to each other, so many deeply and widely mourned. What a fleeting thing human life is!—like the shadow of a cloud, passing swiftly over the fields, leaving behind the flowers, which it visits but for an instant, and the prattling brooks, and the pools that give back the image of the sky, and the song-sparrow warbling on its perch, and the meadow-lark brooding on its nest in the grass—leaving all, all—and hurrying to be lost on the dim, distant hills, where the sight can no longer follow it.

"I miss Putnam greatly. He published two of my books, and I employed him to get together my Cummington Library—about four thousand volumes. What he did for me beyond my special directions was judiciously and disinterestedly done."

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 9th:* I cannot leave New York on the journey which Julia and myself, with two or three others—Mrs. Godwin, Miss Fairchild, and Mr. John Durand—are to make this week to the warmer parts of the Union—say as far as Florida—without writing to you. I went last week, on Thursday, to Roslyn, to speak on the subject of Mexico. I looked over my journal, and my Mexican letters, and then held forth for the space of an hour and a quarter, relating what I had seen, without saying all I had in my mind. I had a most attentive audience, the largest which has attended any of their lectures this winter—many coming from Westbury—and so still that you could have heard a whisper from the other end of the room.

"You wonder what I said to the children at the church in Thirty-fourth Street. Nothing beyond commonplace exhortations, to take the conduct of the Master for their example, and to do everything in their power to make others happy. Mr. Tyndall, who has just sailed

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* To Miss J. Dewey.

on his return, has been much followed after here. I said to Mr. Beckwith, 'He is a pleasant man.' 'No,' was the answer; 'he is merely a scientific man, and those who are so are too much absorbed in science to be pleasant companions.' But I have met him at dinner, and, although he gesticulated very vehemently for an Englishman, I thought him agreeable.

"You ask what books I have been reading. I have just finished one on Madame de Staël, by Amelia Bölte, a German lady of Dresden, whom Fanny (Mrs. Godwin) knows. It professes to be a life of Madame de Staël, but the dialogue is mostly imaginary. What a life! passionate, for she was brought up not to control her passions; almost always unhappy, marrying an old man whom she did not care for, after being twice refused by young men whom she did love, and to whom she offered herself, if not formally, yet in a manner not to be misunderstood; forming, after her marriage, intimate relations with Benjamin Constant, to her father's great grief, and, when he deserted her, marrying, after her husband's death, a half-dead Italian named Rocca, and finally wearing out her life by opium-eating. I am reading now 'Evelyn's Diary,' which I find very interesting."

This visit to the Southern States, as the rancors of the war were nearly forgotten, was an agreeable one. Mr. Bryant was everywhere received in the most kindly manner. At an entertainment given him, in connection with Governor Horatio Seymour, of New York, by Colonel Lathers, of Charleston, the most distinguished citizens took pleasure in doing him honor. Mr. Tupper, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, in addressing him, said, among other things, that his "'Song of Marion's Men' had been sung in many a Southern bivouac, and warmed the soldier's heart at many a Confederate camp-fire." In his reply, Mr. Bryant remarked that "in his walks through Charleston he had not failed to note how by the silent processes of nature the wrecks and devastations of the war were covered and effaced by the growths of the fresh spring, and he hoped that in the same way the moral wounds it had made would be healed with new health-giving sentiments and impulses, which would render the picture fairer than it was

before the rude shocks of conflict had marred its beauty. He trusted that the knightly and generous race, which had made Southern society what it was in happier days, had preserved its vitality, and would produce from the fallen trunk new shoots of life and vigor, and restore, in more than pristine loveliness, the fairest fruits of civilization."

"RICHMOND, VA., APRIL 13th:* We are on our way home from Florida, where we have found refuge from the long and bitter winter, which, at New York, has scarcely ended. I have written two or three letters for the 'Evening Post,' which, if you see that paper, will tell you about our journey. We found summer again among the live oaks and pines on the majestic St. John's. I bought a pair of India-rubber overshoes the day before leaving New York, and put them in my travelling bag, and have never taken them out of the paper in which they were wrapped. What has most impressed me in my visit to the South, and what, I am sure, will greatly interest you, is the effort, which I have witnessed everywhere, to educate for usefulness both the black and the white population. I found excellent schools, both for the blacks and the whites, at St. Augustine; Sunday-schools in thinly settled neighborhoods; a thronged school at Charleston for the sons of impoverished families, sufferers by the war;† a school for the poor whites (a degraded race) at Wilmington, North Carolina, wonderfully successful; and another school, equally thronged with pupils, at Hampton, in Virginia, for educating colored teachers. It would require a letter of several sheets to give you an idea of the extent of these benevolent arrangements, in which people from the Northern States have interested themselves as warmly as the people of the South, and in several instances have contributed more largely to their support. This is a beautiful city, nobly situated on a group of hills, with the James below, murmuring over broad rapids, among little islands, and then gathering its waters into a deep, quiet stream, navigable up to the wharves of the town. The abolition of slavery

* To Miss Janet Gibson, of Edinburgh.

† This was the school of the Rev. Dr. Porter, got together under circumstances of extreme difficulty; a work of faith and love, the account of which has all the interest of a romance.

seems to have given an impulse to its prosperity, and it is growing rapidly in population, having now sixty thousand inhabitants. The season is very late here, as it is throughout all the United States ; but the apple-trees are in bloom, and the large, flowering magnolia, a glorious evergreen, is getting its flower-buds ready for opening.

"I am sorry to hear that your health, since your excellent mother's departure to a better life, has not been so firm as formerly, and hope that repose and the softer climate of Nice will repair it. If we could have had you with us in our Southern sojourn this winter, I am sure that the genial temperature, and the constant sunshine, and the new sights, and the spectacle of what good people are doing for the rising generation, would have greatly pleased you. The moral influence of the labors and sacrifices of those who are seeking to train up children of both races to virtue and usefulness, I am certain, would have had a healing effect on a nature like yours. I am glad that you like what I said about Burns, although the subject is so trite."

It is a coincidence worthy of passing note that, while Mr. Bryant was an object of attention to his fellow-citizens of the South, a distinguished company, in a distant part of the globe, was assembled to do honor to him and his friend Mr. Longfellow. On the 11th of March of this year, the Russian Academy of St. Petersburg, an institution founded by Catharine II, on the model of the French Academy, elected them both as honorary members, in the presence of a brilliant audience. Mr. Tennyson was the only contemporary poet of the English language on whom the same distinction had been conferred.*

* As the account of the affair, given by the "Baltic Gazette," is somewhat curious, I append it :

"The sitting of the Academy was opened in the magnificent hall of the academical building, at 1 P. M., on the 11th of March. Nearly all the eighty regular members of this illustrious body were present. They all wore the gold-embroidered uniform, for Russia uniforms everybody, even her distinguished *littérateurs*. Among the members present were the venerable Count Bestucheff, whose lyrics will convince even those who consider the Muscovite tongue a harsh and inflexible one, that, in the hands of a true poet, it may give utterance to the sweetest and softest strain ; the young Alexis Anikoff, the Juvenal of his country, who is indebted to the personal

"NEW YORK, MAY 24th:* I went to Cummington last week, and found the roads dry and in excellent order; the deep snows had protected the ground from frost, so that when they disappeared they left the ground firm, and the fields ready for the plough. But it was

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friendship of the reigning Czar for the freedom with which he is allowed, in excellent verse, to chastise the follies and vices of modern Russian society; Netzeliff, the son-in-law and worthy disciple of the lamented Pushkine; Baron Offenburg, the grandson of a German, but the most brilliant and elegant essayist of Russia; the novelist Pelnoy, now a decrepit old man, but once the friend of the Czar Alexander I, and, what is worth more, loved and esteemed by Lord Byron; in fact, nearly all the foremost writers of Russia; for St. Petersburg, in a literary point of view, is to Russia what Paris is to France. Every great Russian author is irresistibly drawn toward St. Petersburg.

"The galleries were filled with an equally distinguished audience, although the imperial family was represented only by the Emperor's brother, the Grand Duke Constantine. But he is generally known to be the most cultivated prince of the Romanoff dynasty, and especially noted for his appreciation of, and familiarity with, English and American literature.

"Baron Tolsteneff, a historian of considerable note, and a popular writer of 'Travels in the Western Hemisphere,' rose, and said that to him had been intrusted the honorable task of proposing for membership the American poets, Bryant and Longfellow. These names, he said, were not unknown to Russians. There was present in the assembly a man beloved by all of them (bowing to Professor Katejeneff), who had reproduced in their mother-tongue the finest productions of those two great poets. He himself had had the honor of a personal introduction to them during his travels in the United States. He knew that they were eminent men, great poets, friends of Russia, friends of humanity, venerated by their countrymen, and worthy of being honored by civilized nations throughout the world. In honoring them, the Academy would honor the people of the United States, who are so friendly to us, and it would honor itself. He expressed the confident hope that the election would be voted without a dissenting voice.

"The eloquent address of the orator was repeatedly interrupted by enthusiastic applause, and an equally fervent reception was accorded to Professor Katejeneff, the well-known translator of English and American poets, who, in brief but eloquent words, seconded the motion of the preceding speaker. He mentioned that when he had been reader to the late Empress-dowager, the widow of Nicholas I, that august lady had been deeply impressed by his reciting to her Bryant's 'Thanatopsis,' and had expressed a lively desire to hear more from the same author.

"The venerable Count Bestucheff then rose, and said that the rapid literary development of the United States filled him with amazement. He stated that fifty years ago he had one day asked a St. Petersburg bookseller if he could procure him a book published in New York, whereupon the man had looked at him in surprise,

* To Miss J. Dewey.

a pallid region. Spring had not yet 'kindled the birchen spray,' but the woods were full of the yellow violet in bloom just on the edge of the drifts of snow lingering yet in the hollows, and the golden-hued erythronium nodded to its fellow in nooks where the sunshine was warmest. I was charmed with my buildings, now completely finished —the library and the dwelling-house—the library in particular, so solidly built, and so neatly.

"You have seen that Mr. MacDonald, author of 'David Elginbrod,' has been giving lectures here, and preaching. I was at Dr. Bellows's church one evening when he preached, but found the church packed with a crowded audience before I got there, and though I heard, where I sat, all the noise he made, I could not distinguish the articulations, and lost the discourse altogether. His lecture on Wednesday evening, at which I presided, was much liked, and brought him between six and seven hundred dollars. He is quite a favorite in society.

"I have become feverish in my longing for the green turf, and sprouting sprays, and fresh winds of the country. I saw no green turf in Florida, although under a summer sun. Mrs. Stowe has a lawn before her house that looked of a vivid green as we passed, but it was a patch of oats—the nearest approach that could be made to grass."

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as if he had been joking with him. And now the shelves of every bookseller in the capital were adorned with elegant works printed in America. That country was the friend and neighbor of Russia. Nothing would be more gratifying to him than to join his colleagues in paying homage to great American poets.

"The question was then put by the president, Councillor-of-State Nosvogiez, and in response all the members rose from their seats. Loud applause resounded throughout the hall when the president proclaimed the result in the following words: 'The Academy of Russia, by a unanimous vote, has added to the list of its honorary members William Cullen Bryant and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, of the United States of America. They will be entitled to all the rights and privileges of academicians during their lifetime, and the perpetual secretary will send their diplomas to them.' (*a*)

"In consequence of this election, the two new honorary members, in case they should visit Russia, will be treated with the honors due to noblemen of the first rank. Soldiers of the Imperial Guard would mount guard before the houses in which they would reside, and at court they would have precedence of all except the members of the imperial cabinet."

(*a*) I once enclosed this account to Mr. Longfellow, and he replied that he had not only never received his diploma, but never heard of the incident.

"ROSLYN, JUNE 26th:* I have just been looking at your cottage, where the roses and honeysuckles are in full bloom, a fragrant kind of rose—very fragrant, as you may remember—and the American wistaria is hanging its great blue strings of flowers from the mass of foliage almost to the ground, and before the door is a broad low thicket of a late blooming spiræa, which is getting to bloom in July. If the former inmates had been there, I should say that the grounds never looked so pretty, save that they have just been mown, and the grass wants the silkiness that frequent cutting gives. But the outside of the cottage is getting darker—putting on mourning, in fact—and, if you are never to live in it again, I am afraid I shall have to paint it, were it only to get rid of the melancholy aspect which it wears. When the color is a little brightened, I shall cease to think of what we have lost. But you tell me everybody about you insists that Plymouth is a pleasant summer residence. So is Roslyn, and your cottage at Roslyn especially so. What you want is a pleasant winter residence, and, if you do not get it at Plymouth, you may as well come back."

"ROSLYN, JULY 19th:† I have just returned from a visit to Princeton. It is a fine old place; an ancient village embowered in lofty elms and other great trees—too shady, in fact, but grandly so—the college buildings, churches, and other edifices all of freestone, from quarries hard by; the Theological Seminary towering among its old trees, and its professors living near in palaces. I was told that these great trees are the second generation. The venerable and quiet aspect of the place interested me much. I was lodged at Dr. McCosh's —the president's house—where they made much of me, seeming to regard me as a very old gentleman who was to be particularly attended to. I made a little speech on the inauguration of a very elegant building—and commodious, too—as the college library, the gift of Mr. John C. Green, a wealthy New York merchant, and a native, I think, of Princeton, though not a graduate. The college is flourishing, Dr. McCosh taking great pains to commend it to the public. . . .

"I hear that the Cummington Library, which is now opened to the inhabitants, is much resorted to, and the road to it from my place

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* To Miss J. Dewey. † To the same.

is finished, so that we avoid the steep hill that we were formerly obliged to go over.

"I have been reading Lord Houghton's (Monckton Milnes's) 'Monographs, Personal and Social'; moderately entertaining, but one cannot help thinking, as one reads, that it might have been more so. It is an account of persons of distinction with whom the writer was intimately acquainted—eight of them."

Mr. Dana, who seems to have remarked the various activities of his friend with some degree of surprise, wrote to him in August, saying:

"I look out upon you from my silent twilight cave with admiring wonder. There you are, as if the sun were at high noon upon you, and all astir around you, and you in the fresh vigor of early manhood. Is the sun standing still with you, as with Joshua of old? Is there no declining west for you? Where glow your heavens with the *last* steps of day?"

To this Mr. Bryant answered, a few days later:

"You exaggerate somewhat my activity. It is not so great as you seem to suppose; and such as it is, I am drawn to it by this motive—that I am uneasy when unemployed. My bodily faculties are in pretty good preservation, considering my age, and I feel rather urgently the need both of bodily and mental exercise. Though while employed I am not much haunted with the consciousness of being old, yet the fact is almost always present to my mind that the time of my remaining here is necessarily short, and that whatever I am to do must be done soon, or it may not be done at all. What a queer state our politics are in, and what an able and timely letter was that of your son relative to the two candidates for the Presidency of the United States!"

"BOSTON, SEPTEMBER 15th:* It is a very long time since a word has passed between us. It is not the silence of death of old regards, I am sure. Neither of us, I think, can be of so forgetful a nature. Were it so, death itself, in the departure of an old friend of

* From R. H. Dana, Esq.

us both, would be enough to call it into life again. Phillips was a friend of yours before I knew him at all. It was he who brought me to an after-acquaintance with you by handing in 'Thanatopsis' and 'Entrance to a Wood' for publication in the 'North American Review,' in its early days; the now old 'North American Review,' which seems likely, after having outlived so many of our number, to outlive us all—even you, of whom I hear reports as if in the very prime of life. Indeed, now that our kindly friend is gone, you and I alone are, I believe, all who are left of the early contributors to that work; and in some of the ante-prepared obituaries kept on hand in the pigeon-holes of your editors will soon be interlined in those for you, 'was *sole* survivor of,' etc., ready for use. May the years be many before it shall be drawn out!"

"CUMMINGTON, SEPTEMBER 20th:* I thank you for telling me so much about the last days of our friend Phillips. He lived, when a lad and a youth, for some time in a house which I see from my door here, on a somewhat distant hill-side, and, while studying for college, came to this house to take lessons from one of my father's medical pupils. The publication of the poems which you mention, through his agency, was properly my introduction to the literary world, and led to my coming out with the little volume which you and Channing and he encouraged me to publish, and which he so kindly reviewed in the 'North American.' To me he was particularly kind—unconsciously so, as it seemed; it was apparently a kindness that he could not help. I am glad to learn that his last years were so tranquil, and his death so easy, dropping like ripe fruit, as Milton says, into his mother's lap."

"ROSLYN, DECEMBER 12th: † I thank you for your very kind invitation to meet at your house with the members of the Massachusetts Historical Society, on the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party. For various reasons I cannot accept it, although it would give me pleasure to be present on an occasion like this, which assembles the members of a society comprehending so many eminent men, and possessing so rich a field for its labors. It would be interesting, with them, to look back upon what has happened since the event which

* To R. H. Dana, Esq.

† To the Rev. R. C. Waterston.

will then be commemorated, and to observe how the mighty changes in the fortune of nations—which, while we look only on the present and the future, seem to unroll themselves slowly before our eyes, like a moving panorama—lie crowded together in the past. Such a review would naturally carry the contemplation beyond the limits of your State, and into fields beyond the province of your society, save in occasional glimpses showing the agency of the sons of Massachusetts in new commonwealths founded, peopled, and made great; fierce and bloody wars waged, victories gained, and the republic saved; the discoveries of science turned to practical account, in a manner which fills the world with wonder; mountains pierced, and arid deserts traversed by iron tracks; the East married to the West, and America made the neighbor of China; great men rising and filling the world with their fame, and passing away to take their quiet niche in history; eloquent voices raised, and not in vain, for God and liberty, and then hushed in death; mighty wrongs committed, redressed, and punished; new wrongs committed, and yet awaiting their reward; and all the while, rumors of still mightier changes reaching us from the Old World—rumors of ancient despotisms overthrown, new empires formed, and young republics making the experiment of existence in the seat of old monarchies. History will have much to do in recording the events of the century which ends with the sixteenth of this month."

In explanation of this letter, it may be said that on the 16th of December, 1873, there was a special meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, at the house of the Rev. R. C. Waterston, to celebrate the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Destruction of the Tea in Boston Harbor. Robert C. Winthrop presided. Addresses were made by Richard Frothingham, Rev. Dr. Ellis, Thomas C. Amory, and Winslow Warren; and original poems, written for the occasion, were read by Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Letters received from Henry W. Longfellow, and the above from Mr. Bryant, were read by Mr. Waterston.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIXTH.

THE EIGHTIETH YEAR.

A. D. 1874.

MR. BRYANT began his eightieth year with an address before the Typographical Society on Franklin, not as the statesman and diplomatist, but as the poet (January 17th), and a month later he made a speech on Free-Trade to a mass meeting in Cooper Institute (February 24th); but otherwise his days were wholly uneventful. Of the nature of his occupations these extracts from his private letters give a passing report:

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 26th:* You inquire what I think of the appointment of Mr. Waite as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The more I hear of Mr. Waite the better I am pleased with it. On the third trial I think that Grant has hit the mark; but what inconsiderate nominations the two first were! The truth is that Grant makes many such; but, inasmuch as many of them are to insignificant offices, very little is said about them. Evidently he fails in the very quality that his friends thought he would excel in—the discernment necessary for putting proper men in their proper places. They begin now to talk of his having grown rich after coming into office loaded with debts; but this may be a slander; I hope it is, for it is impossible for a man to accumulate a large fortune by honest means while holding the Presidency.

"I was at Dr. Bellows's church yesterday. James Freeman Clarke preached to a large audience, and remarkably well. He was an-

* To Miss J. Dewey.

nounced in the newspapers, and people came on purpose to hear him, and went away well pleased. . . . Mr. Powers, you know, has resigned the pastorate of the church up town, and the little side church of Russell Bellows must have been given up, for I see him every Sunday in Dr. Bellows's church. I am afraid that the Unitarians in New York are not increasing in numbers. The other denominations are coming so near them—not in the dogmas of the Trinity, but in other matters of doctrine—that, with the exception of that tenet, the general mind does not perceive any important distinction between them. It looks now as if that would be the last tenet to undergo modification.

"On Friday evening, at the request of the inspectors of the evening schools, I went to say a few words to the pupils of one of our female evening schools. I was ushered into a great room, where about four hundred scholars were assembled, a large proportion of them women grown—a great many of German and Irish birth, who are at work all the day and come at night to get the rudiments of an English education. I was told that many of them contrive to pick up in this way a pretty good common-school education. Their school exercises are interspersed with singing, which is an entertainment for them. I was somewhat surprised at their intelligent looks. One of the least agreeable things which I observed was the bad ventilation of the rooms. The teachers are from the day-schools, and add somewhat to their earnings by teaching in the evenings. The expenses are paid by the city, and the result amply justifies the outlay.

"I suppose you have seen that I am to be responsible for a 'Popular History of the United States,' written by Mr. Sidney Howard Gay. It is to be illustrated, and to fill three or four octavo volumes. Mr. Gay is in great spirits in consequence. The first volume will not be published till about the end of a twelvemonth.

"I have not begun building the reading-room yet at Roslyn.

"The commercial world here is very much agitated with the expectation that Congress is about to commit a great financial folly by authorizing the issue of more notes which are not to be redeemed. So far as I can judge, those who expect to profit by this measure will be disappointed, for it is quite likely that commercial confidence has sunk to so low a point that nothing can now stimulate speculation, except, perhaps, for a few days in Wall Street, and it is certain that

those who hope to get hold of the new notes—that is to say, the needy people in the Western States, and other parts of the Union—have nothing to offer for them."

"NEW YORK, MAY 11th:* I cannot come to the antislavery commemoration. I do not feel like going anywhere except to Roslyn. I shall not even make the visit I have always made in May to Cummington. The poem you speak of I suppose you hardly expected me to compose. Such things as occasional poems I have for many years left to younger men; besides which there is nothing more tiresome and flat than a poem read at a public celebration of any event; nothing more unintelligible, unless the poem be read with exceeding skill, and the better the poem is, the less, as a general rule, it is understood by a promiscuous assembly. The only use of verses on such occasions is when they take the shape of a short ode and are sung. I am busy writing the introduction to a 'Popular History of the United States.' I write somewhat against the grain, though I think that I have some good thoughts to ventilate. I would rather have postponed the task till I feel in better spirits. The real hard work of writing the history itself is to be done by Mr. Gay, but it is all to pass through my hands."

"NEW YORK, MAY 17th:† I have got the 'Unitarian Review' which contains your article on the Divine Nature. I read it, and, as you assured me it would, it 'did me good.' It seems to me that you have fairly put down those who insist that the Supreme Being is altogether 'unknowable.' So is everything beyond a certain limit, and when looked at by beings of a limited comprehension. But, as you have shown, we see Him and know Him in what he has done for us, and that we

> 'Gladly behold, though but his utmost skirts
> Of glory, and far off his steps adore.'

You are right about the 'Records of a Quiet Life.' A man named Gage, of Hartford, has been at work at the original, which was entitled 'Memorials of a Quiet Life'; and leaving out what relates to the other Hares, and keeping all the commonplace piety of Maria Hare,

* To John H. Bryant.

† To Dr. Dewey.

has made the book which you have read and obtained a copyright for it. I was all the while looking for something of the literary history of Julius and Augustus when I had it in hand, and was as constantly put off with Maria Hare's reflections, which I had read many times over, in different books. I suppose that with you

'Already spring kindles the birchen spray,
And the hoar pines already feel her breath.'

The Central Park is a glory to look at. The young leaves of different forms and hues of green, and the early flowers, the most frail and delicate of all, make it so at this moment. Nature is now a young beauty, bare-armed, in short skirts, sandalled, unbonneted, and in the thinnest of morning dresses.

"What is going to happen in the religious world? Is the centrifugal force which kept the different sects apart and true to their orbits annihilated, or perhaps merely weakened, so that they are to travel side by side? There is a tendency to fusion growing more and more manifest every day, but I think it will be found that the dogma of the Trinity will be the last which its partisans will be willing to modify. It is remarkable, however, that the liberality of certain of the Episcopal clergy has had the effect of giving us a new sect—the Reformed Episcopal. Is that the way in which religious brotherhood is to manifest itself—by resolving the great old organization into smaller ones?"

"Roslyn, May 29th:* I have just got out to Roslyn—very late—having missed the song of the early birds, the opening of the earliest flowers, and the earliest springing of the grass, to my great grief, and having incurred to my no less disgust scores of calls of a troublesome kind from troublesome people, as I always do when in town.

"'Oh fortunatus nimium sua si bona norint.'

"I cannot make people understand the good fortune of those who are more than a hundred miles from New York. How is it in the world to come? Will patience have had her perfect work in this

* To Dr. Dewey.

sphere, or is the virtue to be exercised there until we shall have acquired an evenness of temper which no possible provocation can disturb? Are the bores to be all penned in a corner by themselves, or are they to be let loose to educate the saints to the sublimest degree of patience of which our nature is capable?

"These are deep questions. I do not remember that you have given any special attention to the use of bores in the moral government of the world in your book on "The Problem of Human Destiny." I admit their utility as a class; they serve a most excellent purpose; but whether we are to be annoyed with them in the next world, that is the doubt. Some of them are most worthy people and capital Christians, and cannot be kept out of Paradise; but will they be allowed to torment the elect there? What does Swedenborg say of their office in the next life?

"But I have got, without intending it, among the mysteries of theology, and am losing my way. You talk of new books; let me speak of an old one. In the two or three days which I have passed here I have been reading the great novel of Cervantes, and have been filled with wonder at the fertility of his invention and the narrative skill. I remember how I laughed over it when a boy, and I have laughed almost as heartily now. I read it backward; that is, I read the later chapters first, and so on."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 18th:* Your letter should have been answered before now, but I have not been till within a few days quite so well as usual, and any exertion has seemed to me a severe task. Besides, it is at all times pleasanter for me to receive and read letters from you than to answer them. I hear that you have a sprained shoulder which gives you some trouble. So have I; I fell in a snow-storm while walking in Broadway, and gave my right shoulder a bad bruise, which has been painful ever since. But that has not been all; I have been out of order otherwise, though now, thanks to Providence, my strength has returned.†

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* To Miss C. Gibson.

† Of Mr. Bryant's uniform health, Mr. Bigelow says, in his memorial address to the Century Club:

"I am warranted in asserting that, until the distressing accident which terminated

"We came out late to Roslyn, for I wished to be near the doctor, as I had fallen and hurt myself; but how beautiful it is here! The vegetation is more than commonly luxuriant; the air is embalmed with the perfume of roses of every hue, and even in Scotland the strawberries cannot pout more temptingly among their leaves than they do here at this moment. If a wish could do it, I would set you and your sister down beside me, and give you an opportunity to compare the fruit with that of your native gardens. Before you left I would show you where I am laying the foundations of a reading-room and lecture-hall for the village, for the people have no places to meet in the evening save in the bar-rooms.* Or, if I had the power, I would astonish you by appearing suddenly among you at Edinburgh, to see again with the bodily eye your kindly faces, and take another look at your noble city, and its grand hills, and its 'star-y-pointing'—why cannot we now say 'star-y-pointing,' as Milton did?—its 'star-y-pointing' castle, looking a whole volume of history and memories of ancient dominion.

" . . . Sometimes I am tempted to envy those who are fortunate enough to pass their winters in Italy—Florence or Rome—with occasional visits to other places. But I console myself with reflecting that I am not of any use there, and that here I may do some good. This existing for one's self alone I have found is attended with a secret uneasiness, a sense of uselessness. If you have the excuse of

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his days, he was never disabled by sickness within the memory of any person now living.

"'In years he seemed, but not impaired by years.'

"Meeting him some years ago, and after a somewhat prolonged separation, I asked him particularly about his health. He said it was so perfect he hardly dared to speak of it. He was not conscious from one week to another, he said, of a physical sensation that he would have different; and was forgetting that he was liable to disease and decay. . . . Not many weeks before his death, and when recovering from a slight indisposition which he had been describing to me (he was then approaching his eighty-fourth year), I said, 'I presume you have reduced your allowance of morning gymnastics.' 'Not the width of your thumb nail,' was his prompt reply. 'What!' said I, 'do you manage to still put in your hour and a half every morning?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'and sometimes more; frequently more.'"

* This hall was built and presented to the town the next year. It was proposed to call it the "Bryant Hall," but the donor refused his name, and it passes simply as "The Hall."

ill-health, it is very well; if you are filling your mind with knowledge, preparing for activity in after-life, it is also well; but beyond this, to vegetate merely in a foreign country, where you can do nobody any good—as is the case with many—seems to me a melancholy way of passing one's life. . . ."

"ROSLYN, JULY 22d:* I wish you were here at this moment to look out from our windows upon the earth, moistened and fresh with recent showers, and the garden full of flowers, and the trees in their deepest verdure and fullest foliage, and hear the song-sparrow twittering on the sprays, and the hermit-thrush making the arches of the neighboring wood resound with his sweet and mellow note, and all this under the bluest and most stainless skies that ever overarched a landscape. As to seeing Scotland again, I do not think of it. At eighty years one is getting ready for a longer journey; and as you will not come to America, we must postpone our meeting till we forgather in the

'Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,'

which the good hymnist, Dr. Watts, speaks of with so much enthusiasm.

"I am sorry to hear that your health does not improve as a consequence of your rambles and sojourns on the continent. Will it never be so ordered that health, like some diseases, will become contagious? What a blessing it would be for some of us if a good constitution were catching, like the small-pox! if freedom from pain, and gayety of spirits, and the due and harmonious action of all our physical organs, could be given off from one to another, by a kind of infection! But, if that were the case, the bad as well as the good would have the advantage of it, and derive from it strength for their guilty purposes, so that on the whole the present arrangement need not be disturbed. . . .

"My own health, concerning which you expressed so kind a concern, is very good again. Only my lame shoulder reminds me now and then, and not very importunately, by neuralgic twinges and shootings of pain, of the unlucky bruise which it had from my fall on Broadway. It always seems to me that there is a kind of disgrace in falling to the ground. Drunken people fall. As I got up, I thought

* To Miss C. Gibson.

to myself, 'Nobody, at least, is here who knows me.' At that very moment a gentleman, whom I did not know, asked: 'Are you hurt, Mr. Bryant?' 'Of course not,' I answered, and I marched off down town as if I had just come from my door."

"CUMMINGTON, AUGUST 7th:* I have thought of what you suggested to me. I find that in what I have to tell I do not remember what relates to others with whom I have been thrown into contact so minutely and accurately as I could wish. I shall be almost confined to my own adventures and affairs; and of these a good deal that is peculiar and characteristic is rubbed off by the lapse of time. I see that the writing of my biography will make a mere egotist of me, and I cannot consent to appear in that character in my lifetime. If I write anything of the kind, it must appear after I have disappeared, provided that anybody shall then think worth while to publish it."

"CUMMINGTON, AUGUST 20th:† As to the book entitled 'Picturesque America,' I am sorry that you were taken in by the travelling agent.‡ Yet I am, in part at least, consoled when I think of the generous confidence in human nature shown both on your part and that of the Eve who joined her persuasions to those of the tempter.

"I am rejoiced to know that we have examples of such ingenuousness to which we can refer; and I am looking for a return of the age of gold—*Redeunt Saturnia regna.* Here is a big quarto in several volumes, made up, as to the letter-press, of descriptions of picturesque places all over the North American continent this side of Mexico, from the Rio Grande to Labrador; minute descriptions—so minute that they must have been written on the spot; and all these you put to my credit on the testimony of a man who had the book to sell. I shall always think the better of my talent for literary work in consequence of your willingness to believe that I am capable of exe-

* To J. C. Derby, Esq., who had written to Mr. Bryant, asking him to write an autobiography—which he began, as we have seen, but did not continue.

† To Dr. Dewey.

‡ A superb holiday book, issued by his publishers. He wrote an Introduction for it and corrected the press.

cuting so vast a task. I edited the work, it is true. Somebody must edit such a publication, and I do not see why I should not do it as well as another. Every part of it, except a few of the first sheets, passed through my hands; and I do not remember that I was ever more weary of any literary task, for the mere description of places is the most tedious of all reading. It was my business to correct the language, omit superfluous passages, and see that no nonsense crept into the text; and this I did as faithfully as I knew how. I wish you had done it in my stead.

"I went last week with my brother John to Plymouth, where I was admitted to the practice of law fifty-nine years ago. We stayed at the Samoset House, a very nice hotel, and saw your sisters in the charming cottage owned by the younger of them—a veritable jewel of a dwelling. We had a most delightful visit there, and were shown all that the place has of interesting and remarkable. On our return we stopped at North Bridgewater, where my father and mother were born, and there we stumbled upon a Bryant—a 'solid man' of North Bridgewater, now called Brockton—who took us to the house where my grandfather Dr. Philip Bryant lived, and to the graveyard where he and his wife Silence lie buried, beside my great-grandmother. The whole place resounds, rather rattles, with the machinery of shoe-shops, which here turn out millions of shoes, not one of which, I was told, is sold in the place.

"I have been reading Lord Campbell's 'Lives of the Chief Justices of England.' That of Lord Mansfield I commend to you if the book comes in your way."

As this was Mr. Bryant's eightieth year, his friends began early to think of some mode of testifying their homages appropriate to his birthday. It was resolved, among several of them, to subscribe for a silver vase commemorative of his career, which should be presented to him at the appointed time, with an address from those who desired to participate in the proceedings. The vase was not finished by the 3d of November, but the friends who had been concerned in getting it up were no less determined to mark the day by an expression of their respect. Already the newspapers all over the country

had remembered the venerable citizen in various remarks on his life and character. On the morning of the 3d he was employed in his duties at the office, when it was intimated to him that a company of friends required his presence at his own house, whither he went, and there met a concourse of residents of the city, with many from other cities. At the head of them was Mr. Jonathan Sturges, an estimable merchant, who presented him with an honorary address, signed by thousands of names from all parts of the United States. In delivering to Mr. Bryant the copy of the address, Mr. Sturges said:

"We have come, dear Mr. Bryant, to congratulate you upon reaching the ripe age of eighty years in such vigor of health and intellect, to thank you for all the good work that you have done for your country and for mankind, and to give you our best wishes for your happiness. For more than sixty years you have been an author, and from your first publication to your last you have given to us and our children the best thought and sentiment in the purest language of the English-speaking race. For more than fifty years you have been a journalist, and vindicated the duties as well as the rights of men, with all the genuine freedom, without any of the license, of our age, in an editorial wisdom that has been a blessing to our daughters as well as to our sons. You have been a good citizen and true patriot, ready to bear your testimony to the worth of your great literary contemporaries, and steadfast from first to last in your loyalty to the liberty and order of the nation. You have stood up manfully for the justice and humanity that are the hope of mankind and the commandment of God. We thank you for ourselves, for our children, for our country, and for our race, and we commend you to the providence and grace of Him who has always been with you, and who will be with you to the end.

"We present to you this address of congratulation with signatures from all parts of the country, and with the proposal of a work of commemorative art that shall be sculptured with ideas and images from your poems, and be full of the grateful remembrances and affections of the friends who love you as a friend, and the nation that honors you as the patriarch of our literature."

Mr. Bryant then made the following brief and unpremeditated reply:

"MR. STURGES AND GENTLEMEN: I thank you for the kind words referring to me in the address which has just been read, and am glad that you find it possible to speak of what I have done with so much indulgence. I have lived long, as it may seem to most people, however short the term appears to me when I look back upon it. In that period have occurred various most important changes, both political and social, and on the whole I am rejoiced to say that they have, as I think, improved the condition of mankind. The people of civilized countries have become more enlightened, and enjoy a greater degree of freedom. They have become especially more humane and sympathetic, more disposed to alleviate each others' sufferings. This is the age of charity. In our day charity has taken forms unknown to former ages, and occupied itself with the cure of evils which former generations neglected.

"I remember the time when Bonaparte filled the post of First Consul in the French republic—for I began early to read the newspapers. I saw how that republic grew into an empire; how that empire enlarged itself by successive conquests on all sides, and how the mighty mass, collapsing by its own weight, fell into fragments. I have seen from that time to this change after change take place, and the result of them all, as it seems to me, is that the liberties and rights of the humbler classes have been more and more regarded, both in framing and executing the laws. For the greater part of my own eighty years it seemed to me, and I think it seemed to all, that the extinction of slavery was an event to be accomplished by a remote posterity. But all this time its end was approaching, and suddenly it sank into a bloody grave. The union of the Italian principalities under one head, and the breaking up of that anomaly in politics, the possession of political power by a priesthood, seemed, during the greater part of the fourscore years of which I have spoken, an event belonging to a distant and uncertain future, yet was it drawing near by steps not apparent to the common eyes, and it came in our own day. The people of Italy willed it, and the people were obeyed.

"There is yet a time which good men earnestly hope and pray for—the day when the populations of the civilized world shall prepare

for a universal peace by disbanding the enormous armies which they keep in camps and garrisons, and sending their soldiery back to the fields and workshops from which, if the people were wise, their sovereigns never should have withdrawn them. Let us hope that this will be one of the next great changes.

"Gentlemen, again I thank you for your kindness. I have little to be proud of, but, when I look round upon those whom this occasion has brought together, I confess that I am proud of my friends."

In the evening of the same day the Bryant Literary Club, of the city of Chicago, celebrated the event by a dinner, attended, in the absence of the poet, by his brothers, Arthur and John, at which speeches were made and poems read in his honor. John Bryant, writing of these manifestations, said:

"Your birthday passed by in a blaze of glory—attended by a great shower of kind notices from the newspapers, and I suppose many congratulatory letters from friends. Such an ovation, I think, has never fallen to the lot of any living man of our time, at least not in this country to a private citizen—all so spontaneous, and without the suspicion of any selfish or interested motive. It must certainly have been most grateful to you and your children; and your relatives here, however unworthy, cannot well avoid partaking of the reflected honors so deservedly showered upon you. And we feel proud that one of our blood should be thought so truly worthy of this meed of praise. I hope your ninetieth anniversary may open upon you as propitiously as the eightieth has done. And I do not see why your chance for reaching that day in good health and vigor is not as fair as, if not fairer than, the prospect forty years ago was that you should reach your present age."

To this the poet responded, from New York, December 5th:

"I am quite uncertain how to take the compliments 'showered' upon me on the occasion of my eightieth birthday, recalling what Charles Lamb somewhere says, 'I stink in the midst of respect.' But I account in part for what the newspapers say of me, almost with one consenting voice. 'I, too, am a journalist,' and a natural feeling leads

them to commend one of their own number who has been fortunate enough to stand pretty well in the opinion of his countrymen. Of such a person they of course would make the most. What is said of me favorably may be applied in some sort to the craft to which I belong.

"Another reason for the good opinion of my contemporaries is that, as a general rule, I have been in no man's way. I have not been a competitor with any man for office or honor, and the feeling of animosity which is awakened by rivalry has had no occasion to manifest itself. These causes have made the commendations of which you speak so general, and so liable to the criticism of being exaggerated."

To another correspondent, two weeks later, December 22d, he presents the same view of the case:

"DEAR MISS GIBSON: It was kind in you and your excellent sister to remember my birthday, and send me your congratulations and good wishes. I send you mine in return—congratulations that you have lived to do so much good in this not ungrateful community, and wishes that you may both reach my age with as few infirmities as have fallen to my lot.

"With regard to what the journals so kindly said concerning my birthday, you will please to remember that it was all said by journalists, and that they were naturally glad of an opportunity to bestow in this way indirect praise upon their own profession. If they were betrayed into considerable exaggeration, they are not without the excuse of a temptation.

"Well, in spite of all that the scientists say, there *is* a morning beyond the night of Death, where it will not be necessary to ask each other how we have slept, but at first sight of each other the fact of refreshing and renovating slumbers will be taken for granted. The 'International Review' is now on my table, in which Dr. McCosh does battle with Tyndall in an able article on 'Ideas in Nature overlooked by Dr. Tyndall.' One great characteristic of these scientists is their conceit.

"We have had a most beautiful autumn, and the glory of the woods has been great. Sunshiny day after sunshiny day, with bland breezes from the southwest, has come and gone, and now the winter is

upon us, and the days are at the shortest, and the sound of sleigh-bells is heard in the streets. I always rejoice in the lengthening of the days, and the return of the sun, slowly as he comes back at first. I think, then, that spring is on its way, with its early flowers and birds, and long hours of daylight for reading. Christmas begins the return of the sun to the northern latitudes, and with it, I hope, will be the return of health to you. I shall be very glad to know that a winter exile, even in beautiful Italy, has not been necessary to you this year. A merry Christmas, then, and a happy New Year to you all."

Mr. Bryant takes pains to account for the honors heaped upon him; but no one who saw how spontaneous and universal they were can doubt that they sprang from a heartfelt sense of his long and disinterested devotion to every good cause.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVENTH.

LEGISLATIVE HONORS.

A. D. 1875.

It was impossible for Mr. Bryant to be entirely idle; and, though he avoided laborious tasks, we find him still employed on several that required considerable assiduity. The anthology, which he had supervised a few years before, was now projected on a larger scale, and he entered into the revision of it with no little ardor. To the brief notes to the publishers, which accompanied his proofs, I again recur, so far as they indicate opinions:

"I will look over the revised edition of the 'Library of Poetry and Song,' and write a brief introduction, which is all that it would require, and, in fact, all that there would be a decent pretext for.

" . . . I have strong doubts about assigning to Andrew Marvell the poems contained in the collection which generally pass for Addison's. Unless the authorship of Marvell be clearly made out, I think it would be better to follow the general voice and give them to Addison. . . .

" . . . I find the enclosed among my papers. The lines are pretty enough, though there is a bad rhyme—*toes* and *clothes;* but I have seen a similar one in Dryden—*clothes* pronounced as *cloes*—and I think I have seen the same thing in Whittier. If you like the verses, you can admit them into the collection. . . . I send you back the manuscript and printed matter designed for your new edition of the 'Family Library.' I have put by themselves the poems which I think should be omitted, but you will see that, on the same half-sheet with the re-

jected ones, there is sometimes a poem or two not included in the rejection.

" . . . The poem entitled 'Pan in Love'* has many beautiful passages, but parts of it are very warm for a collection like this, and it is rather too long for our purpose. If it could begin at the line—

"'Nay, if you will not sit upon my knee,'

and end with the line—

"'Worn round with the smooth sea—you shall have all,'

it would do exceedingly well, if you let it be seen that it is an extract. As to the other poem, 'Marcus Antonius,' it contains a couplet with a cockney rhyme that shocks me, and I have therefore laid it aside. Here is the couplet:

"'This Lepidus, and, worse than all by far,
This mawkish, pious prude, Octavia.'

This is, if anything, worse than the couplet which brought so much ridicule on Leigh Hunt:

"'And bothersome lines he had made on a straw,
Showing how he had found it, and what it was for.'

On the whole, notwithstanding the merit of the rest of the poem, I think it may as well be left out of the collection.

"Looking over the collection thus far, I have not found so many poems of the first class as I expected, and for the reason, doubtless, that the literature of our language does not supply love poems of the highest degree of merit in sufficient number to make so large a collection as you contemplate.

" . . . I wish you would add to the love poems one by Coleridge, 'The Hour when we shall meet Again,' beginning with—

"'Dim hour that sleep'st on pillowing clouds afar.'

It is to be found among the 'Sybilline Leaves.' And also one from Byron, called 'From the Turkish,' beginning thus:

"'The chain I gave was fair to view.'

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* By W. W. Story.

"I cannot find Street's poems anywhere, but I want another from him, and have written to him for it. Can you wait for it two or three days? As to the poems from my pen, I am quite ashamed to see so many of them. You will do me a real favor by striking out half a dozen of them at least. So slash away, and the more you leave out the better I shall be pleased. . . . I would omit John Howard Payne's 'Home,' for reasons apparent on its face. It seems to me me that Gerald Massey's 'Bridal' should also be left out—for its affectations and halting lines.

" . . . The lines which I supposed were translated from the Spanish by Southey are by another hand; but they are found in an appendix to his translation of the 'Chronicle of the Cid,' published at Lowell, by Daniel Bixby, in 1846.

"I send with this copies of the translation from the poem of the Cid, Professor Wilson's two poems, the song from Cowley, the Jewish Hymn, with the 'Genius of Death' and Southey's 'Ebb Tide.'

"If you want something to supply the place of Gerald Massey's 'Bridal,' there is Tickell's poem to 'A Lady before Marriage.' If it is too long, you might end with the line—

"'And specious joys are bought with real woe.'

" . . . On page 1092½ is George Alexander Stevens's 'Storm,' a song which I used to hear sung when a boy. I do not think much of it, and it has four lines which should not appear in a family book of poetry. They begin with—

"'Now all you on down-beds sporting.'

If the poem is retained, these four lines should be omitted—in which case the stanzas should all be printed as of four lines each, and not eight, as now, and the poem would read all the better for the omission.

"If there are wanted more humorous pieces, there is Southey's 'All on the Road to Moscow,' and 'Cataract of Lodore.'

" . . . I would suggest the omission of Thomson's 'Damon and Musidora,' if it be not already struck off—and that something be taken from his finest poem, the 'Castle of Indolence.' I would also omit Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' 'The Eagle,' 'The Owls' 'The Female University.'

"I would add to the collection Cowley's 'Hymn to Light,' and the song in the the third book of 'The Davideis':

"'Awake, my lyre, awake.'

And Leyden's sonnet, 'Sabbath Morning,' beginning—

"'Hail to that placid, venerable morn!'

Also Wilson's sonnet, 'The Evening Cloud,' and 'To a Sleeping Child'; and Milman's 'Jewish Hymn in Babylon'—

"'God of the Thunder, from whose cloudy seat';

and Croly's 'Genius of Death'—

"'Spirit of the drooping wing.'"

About this time Mr. Bryant was solicited to undertake a new edition of Shakespeare, to be printed in a sumptuous style, with copious original illustrations. As he found he could procure the assistance of Mr. E. A. Duyckinck, an accomplished scholar, who took upon his shoulders the collation of the text, the running notes, the life of the dramatist, as well as the more mechanical parts of proof-reading, etc., he was not averse to the proposal. His reading of late had run very much among the older English writers, and he was glad of an excuse for loitering in those pleasant fields. But, familiar as he was with his author—being able to quote almost any part of his more prominent plays as readily as an actor in the active discharge of the duties of his profession—he read all the dramas again, from beginning to end, making notes as he read, and comparing the different editions to detect their diversities. When the book was finished he wrote also a preface of some length, explaining the character of the new edition, and, among other comments, contrasting the manner of Shakespeare with that of the old Greek with whom he had been so long engaged.*

These literary employments did not divert his mind from the political affairs of the nation, with the management of which

* This work was not published, owing to delays in getting the illustrations, which are intended to be of a high order, but will be in due course of time.

by the Government, particularly those of the Southern States, he was more and more displeased. When the Federal forces, under command of General Sheridan, but backed by the authorities at Washington, invaded the Legislature of the State of Louisiana, he busied himself in getting up a meeting in New York to protest against the outrage; and in his address to the assembly, which was large and enthusiastic, spoke with the vehemence and fire of a man of thirty. In his journal, at the same time, he maintained a steady discharge of remonstrances and rebukes against the whole series of injudicious and unconstitutional acts into which the administration allowed itself to be betrayed. No one had taken a more decided part than he during the war with the South, but now that the war was long over, he thought the time had come for the exercise of an unprejudiced and large-minded statesmanship.

But, positive as his convictions were, and open and earnest as he was in declaring them, he did not impair the confidence of men of all parties in his integrity; he only increased and fortified his claims to their respect. His old friend, Mr. S. J. Tilden, having been elected Governor of the State of New York, Mr. Bryant, although he was not a political supporter of the Governor, was among the first to be invited to share the hospitalities of the Executive mansion. He was there most honorably entertained, but the manifestations of good-will did not stop with the Governor. On his arrival in Albany, both branches of the Legislature, then in session, availed themselves of the opportunity to tender him a public reception. In the Senate, which rose as he entered, he was introduced by Senator Robinson, in these words:

"MR. PRESIDENT: I have the honor to present to you the most distinguished citizen of our State—I might say of our country—William Cullen Bryant."

Lieutenant-Governor Dorsheimer, who presided, then invited Mr. Bryant to a seat on his right, and, when all were again seated, said:

"SENATORS: You have sought for this opportunity to pay a signal tribute of respect to one of your fellow-citizens. Honors like this have hitherto been reserved for those who have risen to eminence in the public service; nor do I recall an instance in the history of any State in which our language is spoken where they have been conferred upon a man of letters. But henceforth it will be known that New York—recognizing that States are governed not by statutes alone, and still less by the sword—gives her highest honors to the poet, as well as the law-giver and the soldier.

"I need not recall to you the career of your guest. Every American knows the incidents of that long and honorable life. Still less need I impress upon you the merits of his writings. You remember the glowing words with which in his youth he taught the love of nature and the Christian's faith. You have all seen him seated among the lengthening shadows of evening, and heard him repeat, in English as pure as the English of Addison and Goldsmith, Homer's undying song.

"I know that I utter your heartfelt wishes when I express the hope that the blessings which have been so abundantly given to him may be continued, and that his life may still be spared to the country whose institutions he has defended, whose liberties he has widened, and whose glories he has increased. Senators, I present to you William Cullen Bryant."

Mr. Bryant made a brief response, as follows:

"MR. DORSHEIMER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE: You will pardon me if, on rising to say a few words in acknowledgment of the honor conferred upon me, I find myself somewhat embarrassed on account of the novelty of the occasion. There is a little story, a story some two thousand years old, recorded originally in Greek, I believe—for the Greeks had their jest-books as well as the English—in which it is related that a man lost his little child and made a funeral. A considerable concourse came together of his friends and acquaintances, and as he appeared before them he made an apology for the smallness of the infant that was brought out, lamenting that he had nothing to show them for the purpose of the funeral solemnities of the occasion except the corpse of the little child. (Laughter.) I find

myself in a similar condition. I see before me the representatives of the different parts of our great, powerful, and populous State. I see men who come from our rich and beautiful valleys, from the grand and picturesque mountain regions of the north of the State, from the banks of our glorious rivers, from the borders of our immense lakes, from populous towns and pleasant villages ; towns that are the seats of trade and industry, cities noisy with the bustle of business and commerce, or resounding with the clash of looms, or the blows of ponderous hammers in our manufacturing establishments.

"You come, gentlemen, as representatives of the arts, of the wealth and industry of this great State. On my part I have nothing to offset against this great array except what you see before you, and that is an object certainly disproportionately small compared with this imposing ceremony.

"I have nothing to say, therefore, except to return my thanks for the great honor you have done me, and to add my wishes for your future career. My wish is that this session may prove honorable to yourselves and useful to the community ; that it may be closed with credit, and that it may be long remembered for the service it has done and the benefit it has conferred on the State to which you belong."

On passing to the Assembly Chamber, the Speaker, Mr. McGuire, addressed him as one "who, as poet, journalist, sage, statesman, and man, had written his name, in ineffaceable letters, on the annals of his country, and in the hearts of his countrymen."

Mr. Bryant again replied, saying:

"GENTLEMEN OF THE ASSEMBLY : I cannot take to myself the flattering words which have been uttered by the presiding officer of this Assembly. It would be the utmost stretch of self-admiration to do so. You will allow me, therefore, gentlemen, to put a great deal of what has been said so well, or a great deal of the honor of the reception, to the credit of old age. Old men, my friends, are rarities, and rarity, you know, is often an element of value. Things that are not useful are sometimes rated at a high value on account of the circumstance that they are rarely to be met with. If pebbles were scarce they would not be picked up and thrown at dogs, but would be

sought after and collected by mineralogists, and deposited in the cabinets and be gazed at with admiration. I therefore find it proper, and no other than proper, that I should divide a part of this honor—the greater part of this honor—with those of my colleagues who are remnants of a generation passed away and overlooked in the flood of waters in which we must soon sink and be submerged. I can therefore only return my sincere thanks for the honor, both in their names and in my own, and to add my best wishes that the deliberations of this Assembly may ever be conclusions just and honest; that no desire for self-aggrandizement or for pecuniary profit may ever taint its reputation; and that the labors performed in this session may be hereafter recorded as an honor to you, and to the credit of the State which you represent."

Great applause followed this address, and the Assembly took a recess for a half-hour that its members might be presented to the visitor. These expressions of modesty on the part of Mr. Bryant were unaffectedly sincere, for he could never understand why, with the little he thought he had done, he should be so venerated and praised.

Some allusions to these events are to be found in subsequent extracts:

"NEW YORK, JANUARY 21, 1875: * I thank you for the account of the young Chinese. I did not put it into the 'Evening Post,' because of the many things which were pressing for admission. We shall be obliged to have closer relations with our pig-tailed brethren beyond the Pacific ere long, but I do not contemplate it with any pleasure; I prefer the Caucasian race. The negroes among us are a source of trouble, and there is no knowing what may yet happen as a consequence of the mutual jealousy of races. What if there should yet arise in some corner of the globe a race of men superior to the Caucasian family in intellect, in power of will, and the faculty of commanding others, and, if you please, in symmetry and majesty of person, and multiplying, from small beginnings, to a swarm like that which overcame the Roman Empire in its decline! I doubt whether

* To Miss J. Dewey.

we should ever become perfectly reconciled to them if they should obtrude themselves into our part of the world. . . .

"I went last evening, at Peter Cooper's urgent request, to hear Professor Zachos, who is giving lectures on literary subjects to whoever chooses to come—nobody paying anything. The subject was Burns. A good-looking audience, quite filling the room, listened with close attention to a clever lecture which contained absolutely nothing new, for the subject did not admit it unless handled by a man of genius. Mr. Zachos is the curator of the Cooper Institute, which I went over, and saw hundreds of persons in the reading-rooms and schools. These are always full, and hundreds of people are on the list of candidates for the schools, waiting for vacancies."

It was after this lecture that, repairing to the house of Mr. Cooper, the conversation fell upon the sonorous capacity and beauty of various languages. Professor Zachos upheld the superiority of the modern Greek, but Mr. Bryant was of opinion that it was excelled by the Italian. As a test of the respective merits of the two, he proposed that Professor Zachos should recite something in Greek, while he should repeat a passage from an Italian poet. The Professor complied, and, as soon as he was done, Mr. Bryant, selecting Dante, declaimed a long extract "with a power," says the Professor, "enthusiasm, and fire that electrified his hearers. . . . It was a noble sight, and one to be forever remembered—the white-haired old man completely rapt in the beauty of what he was reciting, and almost oblivious of his surroundings. It was, moreover, a marvellous proof of the influence which the genius of song exercised over the aged poet, in enabling him to overcome, in so animated a manner, his habitual reticence and serenity."

Mr. Bryant's verbal memory was not of that miraculous grasp which is ascribed to Macaulay's, but it was none the less remarkable. He could recall at any time any line of his own poetry that he ever wrote; and very frequently in the office, when some one of the editors was at a loss for a half-remembered verse from Shakespeare, Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth,

Burns, or Coleridge, Mr. Bryant served as a dictionary of quotations, giving, not only the verse desired, but its entire context, with references to other passages of similar purport. Once he came to my house in the country, and while we were sitting upon the veranda I made a remark upon the unprecedented convulsions of nature for which the summer had been distinguished. "Not unprecedented," he replied, "for you know Cowper's description of a season very like this." He then began to repeat from "The Task," and went on repeating for several minutes. After he had gone I thought I would turn to the passage, and found that he had recited about two pages and a half of Southey's edition of the poem without failing in a word. At another time, in crossing the fields with his elder daughter, he quoted a humorous poem of considerable length which she had never heard. "What is that?" she inquired. "Oh, something from Peter Pindar" (John Wolcott, an English satirist) "which I have not thought of since it was first published"—which must have been more than fifty years before, as Wolcott's poems were printed between 1789 and 1812. When crossing the ocean, he used to beguile the tedium of the voyages by repeating poems to himself, and no voyage was ever long enough to exhaust his store.

"NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 18th: * You inquire about the 'reception' at Albany. Several persons of distinction came from great distances on purpose to see the old poet. It is not often that a verse-maker is so honored, and, if this thing is not soon to stop, I fear I shall become conceited. I send you enclosed a paragraph relating to it, cut out of a country newspaper. The mansion of the Governor is a fine, large house, standing by itself on the hill-side in a grassy enclosure planted with fruit-trees, and including a garden, greenhouse, and stables. He has a large household of nephews and nieces, but we were made very comfortable in the ample dormitories and other rooms. The weather was exceedingly cold while we were there, but, as the air of Albany is quite dry, the same degree of cold is not so uncomfortable as it is here.

* To Miss J. Dewey.

"I went the day before yesterday to a funeral—that of the three brothers Delafield—each of them more than eighty years old, with the difference of two years in the age of each—dying at the same time, of the same disorder, pneumonia, and buried the same day from the same church—Trinity. The formula of 'dust to dust' was pronounced separately over their coffins, beginning with the eldest, Major Delafield, by three several clergymen, their different pastors, as I suppose.

"I have been reading 'Greville's Memoirs,' which I find entertaining, as well as really instructive. He shows the inside of court life, and speaks of the follies and weaknesses and immoralities of the royal and noble personages among whom he moved, without the least reserve, and with not much prejudice, though he sometimes makes such mistakes as to call Washington Irving 'rather vulgar,' for the reason, probably, that he seemed not to be familiar with certain things of a conventional nature among the hangers-on of the court. I have looked over, also, the work of Miss Kingsley on our southwestern country. It is not without interest, though in many parts I could not help feeling that it might have been better done. The Church of the Messiah, on the 19th of March, celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. Your brother is to deliver the address, and I have written a little hymn —contrary to my wont—but I was an early member of that church." *

"NEW YORK, MARCH 1st: † The structures which line our streets are built broader every year, and tower higher in the air, and the streets are more crowded, and the dwellings of the rich are more palace-like, and the churches more stately and more elaborate in their architecture. ‡ Everything looks prosperous to those who do not look

* It is the hymn beginning:

"As shadows cast by cloud and sun
Flit o'er the summer grass." (*a*)

† To Miss Janet Gibson, of Edinburgh.

‡ Mr. Bryant was so much impressed by the growing wealth and luxury of New York that he seems to have begun a poem on the subject, which never went beyond these striking lines:

"Corinth! proud Corinth! who, upon the verge
Of the great deep, hast made thy queenly seat!
That deep thy vassal is, and every surge
That strikes thy shore flings riches at thy feet.

(*a*) "Poetical Works," vol. ii, p. 237.

below the surface of things, but the condition of the poor, I think, has never been worse than it has been this winter. Hundreds of families are in great misery for want of employment, and the severity of the season adds to their sufferings. A new association has been formed—at the head of which is Miss Louisa Lee Schuyler—called the 'State Charities Aid Association,' the object of which is to keep an eye upon what is done for the poor throughout the States, and see that the aid is properly administered and that no abuses are practiced. For this purpose Miss Schuylér—a daughter of George Schuyler—has travelled over the State, organizing local committees, whose business it is to look into the condition of the poor, to visit the poor-houses, and see that everything is right. To-morrow evening a great meeting is to be held, at which the plans of the association are to be laid before the public. Miss Schuyler, a great grand-daughter of Alexander Hamilton, seems to inherit his capacity for organization.

"The controversy between the sceptical scientists and the believers in God is carried on here with as much earnestness as on your side of the water. But you shall hear all about this when you come over."

"New York, May 3d:* It would be as impossible for me to write a poem on Bunker Hill as to hold a conversation with an Orientalist in Sanscrit, of which I do not know a word. I am glad, however, to learn that your eminent poets of Massachusetts do not find

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Thy pastures lie afar,
Beneath the western star;
Upon a thousand hills thy shepherds fold
Their flocks; thy herds in boundless meadows graze;
Thy harvests, ripening in the summer blaze,
Clothe the unmeasured leas with rustling gold;
For thee the hardy seaman strikes the whale
By the blue icebergs, and beneath the line
The swarthy tiller of the tropic vale
Gathers the fruits that in his orchards shine.
And earth is razed to feed thy household fires;
Her rivers, gathered from a thousand springs,
Run in the ground with many a branching vein,
And in thy homes gush forth as springs again. . . ."

* To James R. Osgood, Esq.

any such difficulty in their way, and am sure that what they undertake to do they will do well. By my declining to write you have been saved the mortification of being obliged to pay for a stupid poem."

"NEW YORK, MAY 17th :* I am amused with what you say of Miss Mitford, and the business-like way in which she settled her accounts for the other world. She was, I have heard, a kind-hearted creature, and I remember being entertained with her 'Reminiscences.'

"I have been reading one of the series of bric-a-brac publications prepared by Mr. Stoddard for Scribner & Company, publishers. It contains extracts from the 'Autobiography of Chorley,' a writer for the London press, and that of Planché, a writer for the London stage, and they are very entertaining. I could not bear, however, that Chorley, in speaking of Miss Sedgwick, should accompany his expressions of respect with a sneer at her intonations in speaking and her manner of dress. It is difficult for an Englishman to speak of an American without edging in some word of disparagement."

"ROSLYN, JUNE 17th :† As for the times which make it so difficult for some people to keep their bank accounts in proper order, I do not see any more signs of amendment than there are signs of rain. Indeed, I would be willing to lay a pretty heavy wager that we shall have rain before the times will mend. It seems to me that if there were a political party enlightened enough and courageous enough to reduce the duties on foreign goods to a revenue standard, liberating a host of commodities which are either the necessaries of life, or the raw material of other fabrics, the times would receive a fillip which would start the country on the path of a comparative prosperity, especially if accompanied by a return to specie payments. But there seems to be no probability of this. Both parties are ignoramuses and imbeciles, and neither think nor learn.

"I have been reading for my last book Macready's 'Reminiscences and Diary.' There is rather too much of the Diary as a whole, the entries being not always of any interest—scarcely more so than the putting on of a clean shirt would be; but he seems to have been a special good man. He was religious, too, almost to a degree which

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* To Miss J. Dewey.

† To John H. Gourlie, Esq.

reminded me of what Father Charles, of the Monastery of Mount Carmel, said of Louis Napoleon—that he was as pious as an angel. But no man can read the book without loving and venerating the man." *

"CUMMINGTON, SEPTEMBER 3d: † I have not yet seen your history of the Cogswell dinner, but shall watch the 'Evening Post' for it. It is strange that I should have forgotten as I have the speech of Mr. Verplanck. I remember that the office of toasting our guest, Dr. Cogswell, was put upon me, and that I likened him to Callimachus, the Greek Librarian, and Vasca, the Roman, and that the Doctor replied with an interesting history of the Astor Library.

"For these mountain-fields the weather is uncommonly hot; we have had nothing like it for several years here. I found the New York weather, while there at the Goethe festival,‡ quite temperate, and most agreeable. You say you do not understand Faust. Do you understand one half of the poetry that is written nowadays? It is the fashion to be abstruse and oracular. The worst of it is that what is obscure now will become more obscure with time, so as at last to be an inexplicable riddle."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 24th: § I do not know whether I told you about Lord Houghton's visit to Roslyn. He came with his valet, ‖

* To another correspondent he says: "I have been reading Macready's book of 'Reminiscences and Diary,' and am quite in love with his character. I am amazed by finding him so devout, so willing to accept everything as for the best, so grateful for the blessings of his lot. Then he was fair-minded, and just, and even generous, to his professional rivals, and in his domestic life, as far as I can judge from the book, irreproachable; a kind, affectionate husband, a tender father, a good son, and everything else that is amiable and good. But there is a great deal in the book about his theatrical engagements and performances which does not so much interest me." Mr. Bryant saw something of Macready during his visits to this country, and was his guest at dinner abroad, and always spoke of him with great admiration and respect.

† To John H. Gourlie, Esq.

‡ At this festival Mr. Bryant delivered the address on Goethe. See "Orations and Addresses."

§ To Miss J. Dewey.

‖ Apropos of this valet, Mr. Bryant used to amuse himself with telling a little kitchen talk that was overheard. "My master," said the valet, as he seated

and Mr. and Mrs. Bigelow and Mr. Charles Butler and his daughter were our guests at the same time. He was pleasant and entertaining, and made his visit the more entertaining by expressions of delight at the beauty of the place. He had afterward a reception at the Union League Club, where a speech was made by Mr. Choate, the president, introducing him, and he made a speech in turn, in which he gave some advice to our literary class. He counselled them to follow the bent of their own genius, whatever it might be, which was well enough ; but he told them also not to mind being extravagant, or queer, or anything of the sort. He seems to be one of those English critics who are taken with what is odd and singular, and, when they find an American who is not so, hardly know what to make of him."

It gave Mr. Bryant great pleasure to be able to return the attentions Lord Houghton had shown him in England ; and he not only entertained his brother poet at home, but presided and spoke at the breakfast tendered him by members of the Century Club.*

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himself at the tea-table, "is a lord, and the finest poet of England." "Our man," replied a delicate brogue, which disdained the word master, "is better nor a lord, and the greatest poet in the warld," which stopped further discussion.

* When Mr. Bryant had occasion to receive titled personages from abroad, no difference of manner could be observed. Mr. Bigelow, in his Century address, said : "Mere worldly rank impressed him less than any man I ever knew. I was once his guest at Roslyn with a foreigner of some distinction, who, at the close of the first repast after our arrival, presumed upon the privilege accorded to persons of his rank at home to rise first and dismiss the table. Mr. Bryant joined me on our way to the parlor, and, with an expression of undisguised astonishment, asked me, 'Did you see that?' I replied that I did, and, with a view of extenuating the gentleman's offence as much as I could, said that he evidently thought he was exercising only one of the recognized prerogatives of his order. 'Well,' he said, 'he will have no opportunity of repeating it here' ; and he was as good as his word, for during the remainder of our sojourn no one was left in doubt whose prerogative it was in that house to dismiss the table. Some weeks later he alluded to this incident, and quoted, from a conversation he had once held with Fenimore Cooper, his strictures upon this exasperating assumption of the titled classes in some communities of the Old World. He was willing that others should adopt any standard that pleased them best, by which to rate their fellows, himself included, but he would not accept directly or indirectly for himself any other standard than that which, so far as he knew, his Maker would apply."

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHTH.

THE CLOSING YEARS.

A. D. 1876, 1877.

THE centennial year was one of great general excitement, because of the Universal Exhibition opened at Philadelphia, and of a Presidential election, neither of which events, however, interested Mr. Bryant very much. He went to Philadelphia to see the buildings before they were opened, but he did not attend the Exhibition itself, hating, as he said, all crowds. Mr. Joseph R. Hawley, president of the Commission, invited him to prepare an ode for the opening ceremonies, but he satisfied himself with composing a hymn, which was sung by the choir. In his letter to Mr. Hawley (March 14th) he says:

"I am sensible of the compliment paid me in requesting me to compose a poem for the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia. It will not be in my power to comply with the request for several reasons. One is old age, which is another form of ill-health, and implies a decline of both the bodily and mental faculties. Another is the difficulty of satisfying myself in writing verses for particular public occasions, a circumstance which has of late caused me to decline all applications of this nature. If I wanted yet another reason, I should find it in certain tasks which leave me no leisure for the composition of a poem on such an important event."

The old age pleaded here as an excuse is not visible in his poetical productions of this time. It was only a little while

before that he had written "Christmas in 1875," a fine Miltonic inspiration, full of force and fire; and the beautiful lines recalling his own career, "A Lifetime." He was even then engaged on "The Flood of Years," which many judges regard as his most impressive work, marked by the stately movement and imaginative splendor of the "Thanatopsis" of sixty years before.

The commemorative vase Mr. Bryant's friends had caused to be prepared in honor of his eightieth birthday was presented to him on the 20th of June of this year. A large number of citizens were gathered for the purpose in Chickering Hall, where the vase was exhibited, and addresses were made by the Rev. Dr. Osgood, complimenting the artist, Mr. J. H. Whitehouse, and his assistants, and afterward the poet. Mr. Whitehouse, acknowledging the good words spoken of his work, remarked that when it was proposed to him "his thoughts at once flew to the country, to the crossing of the boughs of trees, to the plants and flowers, and to a general contemplation of nature; and these, together with a sort of Homeric influence, produced in my mind the germ of the design: the form of a Greek vase with the most beautiful American flowers growing round and entwining themselves gracefully about it, each breathing its own particular story as it grows." In the fulfilment of this design, a fine piece of *repoussé* work was produced, which combined the severity of the Greek spirit with something of the effusion and freedom of our American life. On one side of the vase was a medallion of the poet's head, and on the reverse two female figures of Poetry contemplating Nature. Other medallions represented the boy, learning verse from his father, who points to Homer, or musing in the grove where "Thanatopsis" was conceived. The most primitive form of the printing-press recalls the career of the journalist; the Iliad and the Odyssey are suggested by the side of the Hebrew Bible; and among the ornaments are the waterfowl, the bobolink, and the fringed gentian, while the ivy tells of age, the water-lily of eloquence, and the amaranth

of immortality. Broken shackles hint of the poet's work in the abolition of slavery, and leaves of Indian corn and cotton of the great products of his native land.

Mr. Osgood, in his address to the poet, dwelt upon the educative influence of his writings, which a half-century before had gone into the common schools and formed the minds of more than one rising generation to the love of beauty and virtue. Mr. Bryant's reply was extremely modest, disclaiming all merit for himself, and extolling the merits of the artists by whom the vase had been made. His words were these:

"I shall begin what I have to say with thanks, and with thanks I shall end it—thanks to my excellent friends who have concurred in the presentation of this beautiful vase, thanks to the artists by whom it is designed and executed, thanks to my friend the chairman of the committee for the obliging expressions with which he has accompanied the presentation, and thanks to this fair audience for the encouragement of their presence. After expressing my acknowledgments for the honor done me, it would be easiest for me to take refuge in silence; but this would hardly become me, after the kind words addressed to me, and the superb gift offered to my acceptance. I fear that I might be accused of imitating an example of which I remember to have read some forty years since. A volunteer military company in a provincial town of England once on a time presented their captain with a silver pitcher. The non-commissioned officer who presented it, approaching his commander, held it out to him, and said: 'Captain, here's the jug.' To this the captain replied: 'Aye, is that the jug?' and there the speech-making ended, and the company were ready for the festivities of the evening. I am afraid that a similar condensation of what I have to say might be as ridiculous.

"Mr. Chairman of the Committee, and you, my good friends, who have done me the honor to be here, I would not have you understand that I have the great presumption to take the obliging things said of me as my due, or this superb gift before me as earned by any service which I have rendered in any quarter. I wish I deserved it all; but, knowing better in my heart, I put a large balance—a very large one—to the credit of your generosity. What merit would be yours if I had fairly

earned all that you are bestowing upon me? You would be simply doing your duty; you would be paying a debt. I should have no thanks to give, and you no honor for your benefaction. But consider it in the other light: suppose that I receive these testimonials of your kindness without having earned them, and this proceeding becomes an act of munificence, noble, princely, imperial—a munificence deserving to be extolled in the choicest phrases which language can supply, inasmuch as it is like the bounty which showers the genial rain and pours the sweet sunshine on the unjust as well as the just, and under the influence of benignant seasons ripens the harvests of the field for Tweed as well as for Dr. Muhlenberg.

"And now a word concerning the superb vase which is before me, the work of artists who are the worthy successors of Benvenuto Cellini, and eminent in their department. It has been greatly admired by those who have seen it, and deserves their admiration. I remember to have read, I think some half a century ago, a definition of the term genius—making it to consist in the faculty of accomplishing great results by small means—the power, in short, which an individual has of overcoming difficulties by a forecast and vigor not possessed by others, converting obstacles into instruments of success. This vase I may call a product of genius, both in the design and the execution, for who would suppose that any skill of the artist could connect with such a subject as he had before him images so happily conceived, so full of expression, and so well combining expression with grace? My friends, we authors cultivate a short-lived reputation; one generation of us pushes another from the stage; the very language in which we write becomes a jargon, and we cease to be read; but a work like this is always beautiful, always admired. Age has no power over its charm. Hereafter some one may say: 'This beautiful vase was made in honor of a certain American poet, whose name it bears, but whose writings are forgotten. It is remarkable that so much pains should have been taken to illustrate the life and writings of one whose works are so completely unknown at the present day.' Thus, gentlemen artists, I shall be indebted to you for causing the memory of my name to outlast that of my writings."

The letters of this year contain but few references to his studies, of which I cite only the following:

"ROSLYN, JUNE 19th:* Your remark concerning the ease with which Macaulay fell to crying amused me. But Macaulay was really a man of strong sympathies, though he might have indulged them on fitter occasions than that of reading in Homer how poor old Priam rolled in the dirt. It is a pity that there was not somebody at his elbow to say to him that perhaps it was not true. I have read parts of "Macaulay's Life" with a good deal of interest. But there is another book of a like character which I have read with still more interest—'The Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor.' They are full of anecdotes of distinguished men, and the letters and journals seem to have been written with a view of preserving as much that was peculiar and characteristic about people of note as he had the opportunity of observing, with the view of their being at some time published. The man himself was not, I think, a perfectly agreeable man; that is to say, he had some unpleasant peculiarities. He had his own set of people, and seems to have looked down upon everybody else. Every now and then there is a gap in the journal, or in some letter; most likely some comment of an unfriendly nature on the character of somebody has been omitted by the prudence of Mr. Hillard, the editor, or that of Mr. Ticknor's wife and daughter, who shared in the task of editing the 'Journal and Letters.'"

Two private marks of attention may be recorded here: the first conveyed to him in a letter from Richard H. Dana, Jr., as follows:

"MANCHESTER, MASS., AUGUST 23d: My son, who has been visiting at Pembroke Lodge, sends me the enclosed from the Countess Russell. The son she refers to was Lord Amberly, the oldest son and heir, who died last winter.

"Richard says that Lady Russell would be gratified to have you know that her son, in his last hours, had drawn great comfort from the moral teachings of your verse, and both she and Lord Russell would be gratified if you would, in some way, write a line to acknowledge the receipt of this little record."

The note from Lady Russell, enclosed in Mr. Dana's letter, was this:

* To J. H. Gourlie, Esq.

"PEMBROKE LODGE, RICHMOND PARK, JUNE 25th: In a beautiful farewell letter to me from my son, written in the prospect of death, January 5, 1876, the following passage occurs: 'I look forward to death calmly and unmovedly, like

> '"One who wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."'

He died January 9th. FANNY RUSSELL."

Mr. Bryant replied from Cummington, August 28th, thus:

"DEAR MR. DANA: I am obliged to you for sending me the memorandum in the handwriting of Lady Russell, and I pray you to convey my thanks to her for having written it in the expectation that it would be seen by me. It is a very great satisfaction to me to learn that anything which I have written could make such an impression on the mind of a young man as to be remembered, by way of consolation, in the hour of death. I am, dear Mr. Dana, faithfully yours,

"W. C. BRYANT.

"RICHARD H. DANA, JR., Esq."

The second incident grew out of the visit of the Emperor Dom Pedro, of Brazil, to New York, in the course of his tour around the globe. Mr. Bryant was one of the committee of citizens appointed to receive the imperial guest; and, when the committee were presented to him, he singled out Mr. Bryant as an old acquaintance, saying that he had long been familiar with the poet's works,* and they continued chatting together for some time. Later in the year Mr. Bryant was not a little gratified and surprised to receive from the Emperor the following letter:

"Quand j'ai visité la grotte appelée d'Homère sur les bords du Mélés près de Smyrne j'ai cueilli cette feuille de chêne avec un gland que j'offre au traducteur d'Homère comme un hommage à son talent et un souvenir des bonnes heures que la lecture de sa traduction m'a procurées pendant mon voyage en Californee et des courts moments

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* See vol. ii, p. 199.

où j'ai joui de sa compagnie. Ce n'est que d'ici que je puis envoyer ce temoignage de l'estime de votre bien affectionné,

"D. PEDRO D'ALCANTARA.*

"BEYROUTH, 11 Novembre, 1876.

"P. S.—J'ajoute autres feuilles de la même grotte."

There was a great deal of political excitement this year, as usual, when a President is to be elected, but Mr. Bryant was little affected by it. In the first place, he was thoroughly dissatisfied with both the leading political parties. Writing to a friend in England under date of February 16, 1876, he said:

"You complain that you do not understand our politics. Neither do I. Our country seems to me to be disgraced by the conduct of both parties. Neither seems to have any other object than to get or keep in power, and keep the other out. There is no longer any contention about measures and policy. Each party is divided in regard to the great questions before the country, and the consequence is that those questions are left to take care of themselves, and no party gives its earnest and steady efforts to bringing them to a right solution. As to President Grant, there is no danger that he will be elected for the third term, even if he should be nominated, which he will not be. It is not impossible that by and by the hard-money men and free-trade men of both parties may come together and form a party, but that may not perhaps be till after another election."

His own party, the Republican, of which he had been one of the founders, had enjoyed such an uninterrupted success

* "To Mr. William Cullen Bryant. When I visited the grotto named after Homer, on the borders of the Meles, near Smyrna, I gathered an oak-leaf, with an acorn, which I offer to the translator of Homer as an homage to his talent and a remembrance of the happy hours the reading of the translation procured me during my travel in California, and of the brief moments in which I enjoyed his company. It is only from this place that I could send this evidence of the esteem of your very affectionate, etc.

"P. S.—I add other oak-leaves from the same grotto."

The acorn was planted at Roslyn, but I cannot learn that it took root.

for many years that it had gathered to itself many of the corrupt elements of political life; and this corruption was so pervasive that it had invaded, for the first time in our history, the very ministers of state. One of them had confessed his offences and resigned; another was retained in the face of the most overwhelming evidences of his profligacy, and the Executive mansion itself was arraigned in the courts, through a subordinate, for participation in shameless frauds. The better part of the Republicans were outraged by these and other exposures, and an earnest but futile attempt was made, in which Mr. Bryant joined, to produce a revolt against the growing evil. Meetings were held to utter protests, and to organize an independent movement, but they produced little or no effect upon the older parties. The nation was in the control of "the machines"—as the gigantic combinations of politicians are called—and its bones were remorselessly ground up to make bread for their managers.

Mr. Bryant was, in the second place, particularly embarrassed, amid other political complications of this year, by the nomination, on the part of the Democrats, of his life-long and highly esteemed friend, Mr. S. J. Tilden, as their candidate for the Presidency. Apart from his respect for Mr. Tilden's high intelligence and spotless character, he agreed with him in his fundamental political philosophy. They had been Democrats together in earlier times, had fought together the battles of free soil against the slavists, and incidents only, not principles, had separated them in later days. It was upon the presumption of this sympathy that Mr. Tilden's adherents acted when they supposed that Mr. Bryant would consent to become one of the Democratic electors. Mr. John Bigelow, Secretary of State in New York, consulted him on the subject as follows:

"ALBANY, AUGUST 27th—MY DEAR MR. BRYANT: It has been one of my dreams for several months that your name should head the Tilden electoral ticket for the Presidency. It has not been practicable for me to see you since the St. Louis Convention to confer with

you in person about it, and I am now obliged to ask the Governor's Secretary, Mr. Newell, to do me the favor to convey to you this expression of my sincere hope that, if named as an elector, you will not decline. You need not be told how gratifying such a nomination would be to Governor Tilden, nor need I recapitulate the obvious reasons for your desiring to oblige his friends, a large proportion of whom are in politics your pupils, with the use of your name. . . . To all such it would be an unspeakable satisfaction to know that you would not refuse to be charged with the duty of taking their votes to Washington and depositing them for the candidates who, in their judgment, to-day represent the best hopes of the country."

To this appeal Mr. Bryant replied from Cummington, August 28th, in these words:

"My Dear Mr. Bigelow: Your letter of yesterday was an utter surprise to me. There are many reasons why I must decline allowing my name to be placed on the Tilden electoral ticket, some of which you will, I think, understand without my referring to them. Others relate to the character of the two parties in the field, and the letters of acceptance written by the different candidates for the Presidency. Such as they are, they constrain me, with a force which I cannot resist, to decline acting on the suggestions in your letter. It gives me great pain to refuse anything to the friends of a man whom I esteem and honor as I do Mr. Tilden, and whom I know to be so highly accomplished for the most eminent political stations, whose opinions of the proper province and objects of legislation have been formed in the same school as my own, and who, so far as his party will not obstruct him, will, I am sure, act not only with ability and integrity, but with wisdom, in any station to which the voice of his countrymen may call him."

To another gentleman Mr. Bryant, on the same day, gave his views at greater length:

"Cummington, August 28th:* I do not wonder that many thoughtful persons are undecided as to which candidate they shall

* To J. C. Derby, Esq.

support in the coming election of President. Both parties profess to aim at the same ends. Which has the best candidate, and which party can be most depended upon to adopt and enforce the necessary measures, are the questions which people are asking. If you look only to the candidates, Mr. Tilden is the best—the most of a statesman, the soundest and most enlarged in opinions, and, I think, of the firmest character. If you look at the parties by which the candidates are brought forward, the Republican party is the most to be relied on—although both parties, judged by the proceedings of their representatives in Congress, are greatly degenerate, and, whichever of them obtains the ascendency, those who look for a complete, radical, thorough reform, will be disappointed. Some changes will doubtless be made for the better, but those who expect all abuses in the administration of the Government to be done away will find their mistake.

"As to the hard-money question, it seems to me that it is safest with the Republicans. The Democratic party of the West are deeply infected with the inflation heresy. It is now smothered temporarily, but as soon as the election is over it will break out again with violence. The Republican party is most free from its influence.

"As to the civil service reforms, which both parties profess to desire, Mr. Tilden has not pledged himself to abstain from the vicious practice of turning out indiscriminately all whom he shall find in office in case he is elected. He only promises to look carefully into their characters and qualifications. I infer that all whom he finds in office must go out. Who will answer for him that all whom he appoints will be worthy of their places? Thousands, tens of thousands, will flock to Washington for their places—all of them good Democrats—and it will be absolutely astonishing if a large number of those who are appointed do not turn out to be rogues. Hayes, who only promises to send adrift the unworthy, will have an easier task, and leisure to exercise a just discrimination.

"As to the revenue laws, which are without doubt one cause of the hard times, neither Mr. Tilden nor Mr. Hayes have spoken of any reforms to be made. Perhaps the chance of an enlightened revision of these laws is best in case the Democrats obtain the ascendency, but how slight the prospect of such a revision is I leave to be inferred from the late proceedings of the Democratic House of Representatives.

"You see, therefore, that when we come to compare the prospect of reforms under one of the two parties with that under the other, a man who is slow in forming conclusions might be forgiven for hesitating. Yet the greater number of those dissatisfied Republicans who came to the Fifth Avenue Conference, including most of the wisest heads among them, have acquiesced in the nomination of Hayes. The Cincinnati Convention did not give them all they wanted, but came so near to it that they thought it the wisest course to be content, and not to separate from the party with which they had hitherto acted. I thought the same thing in regard to the 'Evening Post'—namely, that it would not be well to detach it from the party which had carried the country through the Civil War until it was forced to do so by the signs of a hopeless degeneracy. There may have been something in the 'Evening Post' which I have not agreed with altogether, being at so great a distance from it that I could not be expected to influence it in everything; but in the main it has treated Mr. Tilden with marked respect."

Learning, in the interval, from another friend, the steady and determined devotion of Mr. Tilden to the best principles of civil service reform in the administration of State affairs, Mr. Bryant hastened to add this supplement to his letter, lest he should do injustice to an upright and enlightened magistrate.

"CUMMINGTON, SEPTEMBER 4th: I did not write my previous letter for publication, and beg that you will not let the press get hold of it. I have a fear also that I may have done injustice to Mr. Tilden in regard to the reformation of the civil service. If so, his letter of acceptance was the cause. I looked it over for some condemnation of the practice, so long followed, of turning out of office all the men of the beaten party after an election. I found no such condemnation, and inferred that he meant to leave himself at liberty to follow the practice. I have since learned that he has, in many instances, appointed men of the Republican party to offices in his gift solely on account of their competency and character. This was nobly done, but he will have great difficulty in resisting the pressure which will be brought to bear upon him in order to force him to make a clean sweep

of the public offices, and fill them with men of his own party. I am willing, however, to take what I have heard as a proof of Mr. Tilden's present disposition, and hope that it will not be overcome by the force which will assuredly be brought against it."

Mr. Bryant voted at the election in November; but how he voted no one was ever able to learn. Members of each of the leading parties claimed his name; but, when himself questioned on the subject, he simply smiled, and said that the ballot was a secret institution. His journal, however, with which he seldom interfered, lent its aid to the candidates of the Republicans during the canvass, and justified the various proceedings by which the politicians at Washington wrested the Executive office from him who had been clearly chosen to it according to the regular forms.

In the following letter, written after the election, is a brief allusion to the result:

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 25th:* This is Evacuation Day, the day when, in the Revolutionary War, we saw the last of the red-coated soldiery. But we celebrate it no longer; we have other things to think of now; we have chosen a President, and are trying to find out who it is. We shall be gainers at any rate. Let who will be awarded the Presidency, his administration is sure to be better than the present one. I have never before felt so little interest in a contest for the Presidency. Both parties profess to have the same ends in view; both have put up able and well-intentioned men for candidates. Tilden is the abler, and the more thoroughly a statesman, and, I think, the more persistent of the two in any course he has marked out for himself; but his party has suffered in character by the late rebellion, which forced many of the best people to join the Republican party. We—that is, the country—shall not, under the administration of either of them, get all that we ought to have, but we will hope for the best. Abuses will survive, great enough to give plausible ground for opposition. . . .

"To go back to the weather, a subject of some importance at this

* To Miss C. Gibson, of Edinburgh.

time of the year. We had a most beautiful 'Summer of All Saints,' as the French call it, to usher in the month of November, the sweetest sunshine lying on the bright green fields and on the parti-colored woods, which kept their brilliant foliage later than usual. And now we have it back again upon the bare woods, and the leaf-strewn walks around our dwelling. If we had primroses in this country, we might say with Southey :

> "'The solitary primrose on the bank
> Seemed now as though it had no cause to mourn
> Its bleak autumnal birth.'

But we have dandelions, and they are opening on our lawn in this golden sunshine. For 'solitary primrose' read 'lonely dandelion.'

"Our Centennial Exhibition has come to an end, and I did not go to see it. I ran down to Philadelphia to look at the buildings and grounds just before the various objects on exhibition were arranged in their places, and was pleased to find everything on so ample a scale, and so well contrived. But I am less curious than formerly in regard to such things. I expect soon to see things better worth looking at than any World's Fair—this world, I mean."

If anything could have attracted him to Philadelphia, it would have been the Universal Peace Convention, of which he expressed his approval in this letter to the secretary, Mr. A. H. Love :

"Roslyn, July 5th : I cannot attend the Peace Convention soon to be held in Philadelphia, but I hope that it will not be wanting in a large attendance, and that its proceedings will be worthy of its great object. It is well, upon an occasion which brings together representatives from every part of the civilized world, that the friends of peace should discuss in their presence the duty of the nations to put an end to the custom of war. Besides the great Fair, which displays the products of the arts of peace, by which life is dignified and adorned, and even prolonged, an opportunity is given to show how fearfully labor is wasted and ingeniously misemployed, and resolution and endurance misdirected in the work of mutual destruction. The hopes and prayers of good men in all parts of the globe are with

those who seek to confine the arts of life to their proper peaceful and beneficial purposes, and to reclaim man from practices which he inherits from the savage state."

During the next year, 1877, two events only are marked in which Mr. Bryant participated. One of these was the erection of a statue by public subscription to his old companion, Fitz-Greene Halleck, which he helped in such ways as he could. It was generally thought that he was the proper person to introduce the proceedings of inauguration; and, as the President of the United States, Mr. Hayes, and several members of the Cabinet, were coming from Washington to take part in them, he could not refuse the small duty assigned him. He rode with the procession—which, curiously enough, was military as well as civic—through the streets to the site of the monument in Central Park, and there spoke as follows:

"I will not believe that all this concourse has been attracted hither by mere curiosity. There are numbers among you who come to honor the memory of the poet whose statue is to be displayed to the public view—numbers who remember the enthusiasm with which they first read Halleck's poem of 'Marco Bozzaris,' instinct with a fiery martial spirit—numbers who recollect in what glorious stanzas he expressed his admiration of Burns—numbers who have read with a thrill of delight his fine poem of the 'Field of the Grounded Arms,' celebrating the day when on the plains of Saratoga the British host, with its proud commander, surrounded by the army of the republic, were taken captive like pigeons in a net. There are many here whose hearts have responded to the tribute paid by Halleck to woman as the restorer of 'earth's lost Paradise in the green bower of home,' and many who have admired the genial and playful spirit in which he satirized the follies of New York society. My friends, you shall hear to-day a fitting expression of the admiration with which Halleck is regarded from a man of kindred genius, and, like him, author of a graceful satire levelled at our social follies. You shall hear, also, a poetic tribute to Halleck's memory by another eminent poet, composed in his retirement in Massachusetts, and worthy to be placed

beside the noble verses which Halleck in a moment of inspiration poured forth to the memory of Burns.

"In the mean time I am to present to you a distinguished personage, who has consented to grace this occasion with his presence and to take part in these ceremonies. The veil will now be withdrawn from the statue of our departed friend and poet by the President of the United States, who, in behalf of the subscribers to the fund for erecting it, will present it to the city of New York."

President Hayes then unveiled the statue, which had been covered with the national colors, and in a few words made the presentation; Mayor Ely accepted the statue in behalf of the city; Mr. Whittier's lines were then recited, and the discourse by William Allen Butler delivered.

Nor could Mr. Bryant well decline the reception tendered him on his birthday, later in the year, by the Goethe Club, of which he had been a member, and the fellows of which held him in such high esteem. It was given on the evening of the 3d of November, and brought together many of the more prominent ladies and gentlemen of the city. Dr. Ruppaner, the president, welcomed him in eulogistic terms, and the Rev. Mr. Alger made a beautiful address, to which Mr. Bryant replied, for the most part, in a strain of humor. He feared, he said, that he had come to be in the estimation of his countrymen an antique curiosity, like those that Schliemann was digging from the ruins of Troy, or the remains of the Lake-dwellers of Switzerland; but none the less he was gratified by the kindness with which he was always received.*

Out of the letters of the next year, which ran its smooth way without notable events, these extracts may be read:

"ROSLYN, JUNE 2, 1877:† . . . I stop in the midst of reading Miss Martineau's memoir of her own life—an entertaining book for the most part, with one or two tedious places; but how immensely con-

* "Orations and Addresses," D. Appleton & Co.

† To Miss J. Dewey.

ceited the woman was! One would think, on reading what she says of herself, that the whole world stood still while it was waiting for her directions. She is very contemptuous in her judgments of almost every eminent person whom she had any acquaintance with, and expresses her contempt without the least reserve. I perceived that trait in her character when she was here. She seemed to fancy that she had crossed the Atlantic to enlighten us in regard to our duty and interest, and that all we had to do was to submit ourselves to her guidance. Her notions in regard to another life are amusing. It makes no difference, according to her, whether it is we who live after we die or somebody else. It is mere selfishness to wish for an existence beyond the grave, when it is plain that if somebody else is alive after we are buried it is just as well. The world will go on after we have left it; other people will live, and that is as good as a resurrection.

"I have read every word of Canon Kingsley's 'Life and Letters,' and thought better of him for reading it. He was very decided in his opinions, but very modest in his notion of his own merits; and, though conservative in regard to the Anglican Church, tolerant and kind to those who did not agree with him. He was a friend to the humbler classes, and a most faithful and sympathetic pastor, wearing out his life for his flock; yet I cannot see that he contemplated doing them any good, save by personal effort and kind attentions. I do not find in any part of the memoir that he sought to improve the institutions under which the working class in England had been kept poor and degraded. But his personal attentions with respect to their comfort, their health, their spiritual condition, and their mental improvement, were constant, and these, along with his literary labors, undermined his health and broke it down once in two or three years. He was a worn-out man when he came to America. But read the book, if you can get it. If you skip anything, skip the letters in which he tries to be jocular and runs into slang—mere slang, which he seems to take for fun."

"Roslyn, June 25th:* A letter, addressed by you to Mrs. Spring, having been sent to me for my perusal, has reminded me that I have

* To Mrs. R. C. Waterston.

neglected to write to you by way of expressing my sympathy with you and my good friend, Mr. Waterston, in the great loss you have sustained by the death of your brother, Edmund Quincy.

"The circumstance which forms the principal consolation under this loss—namely, the blameless and beneficent life of your brother—serves only to heighten the calamity. There is yet another, though not an equal, consolation, in the universal acknowledgment of his worth. When a good man departs it is fortunate for mankind if he leaves behind him a memory which the world holds in reverence, and to which men refer as embalming an example worthy of universal imitation. It is thus that he may be said to live after death—not merely in the spiritual world to which he has passed, but in the minds of those who are encouraged to emulate his goodness by the testimonies of affection and sorrow which they who best knew him bring to his grave. In this way his agency in doing good survives the term of his existence on earth."

"Roslyn, July 6th, 1863:* . . . It seems to me that in style we ought first, and above all things, to aim at clearness of expression. An obscure style is, of course, a bad style. In writing we should always consider not only whether we have expressed the thought in a manner which meets our own comprehension, but whether it will be understood by readers in general.

"The quality of style next in importance is attractiveness. It should invite and agreeably detain the reader. To acquire such a style, I know of no other way than to contemplate good models and consider the observations of able critics. The Latin and Greek classics of which you speak are certainly important helps in forming a taste in respect to style, but to attain a good English style something more is necessary—the diligent study of good English authors. I would recur for this purpose to the elder worthies of our literature—to such writers as Jeremy Taylor, and Barrow, and Thomas Fuller—whose works are perfect treasures of the riches of our language. Many modern writers have great excellences of style, but few are without some deficiency. . . .

"I have but one more counsel to give in regard to the formation

* Published in "The Christian Intelligencer," July 11, 1877.

of a style in composition, and that is, to read the poets—the nobler and grander ones of our language. In this way warmth and energy are communicated to the diction, and a musical flow to the sentences."

"ROSLYN, JULY 12th:* You ask whether Jeremiah Black is an authority in political matters. I think it would make those who know him smile to know that you had asked the question. He is a vehement partisan, and nothing else, where politics are concerned—though he is a lawyer, an advocate of some note, and, I suppose, large practice. I began to read his article in the 'North American Review,' but did not like the tone of it, seeing that he began to call names before he had brought forward his proofs and arguments.†

"I suppose, for my part, that there is no knowing on which side the cheating was the greatest. If there had been a perfectly fair election at the South, with no intimidation, and no improper influences brought to bear upon the blacks in the Southern States, the strong probability is, I think, that Hayes would have had the constitutional majority. But there was intimidation—a great deal of it, perhaps, of a sort for which there was no remedy; such, for example, as is practiced here at the North by owners of manufacturing establishments, and other employers—influences of which the law cannot take notice. The returns from the different districts of the Southern States would, therefore, if not tampered with in any way after they had been formally made out, have, in all probability, secured the election of Tilden, but, even then, would have left the doubt whether he was fairly elected. To counteract the effect of what was done by the whites working on the interests and fears of the blacks, the scheme of having Returning Boards was invented. They were managed by Republicans, and threw out all the returns which they took a fancy to say were from districts in which intimidation was practiced. It is likely they threw out some returns which they ought not; but, at all events, they threw out enough to elect Hayes, if their doings were approved. If it had happened that the Electoral Commission, in their verdict, had set aside the proceedings of the Returning Boards, which had been legalized by the Legislatures of the Southern States, and declared that Tilden

* To Miss J. Dewey.

† On the results of the recent Presidential election.

was elected, it is not at all improbable that the Republicans would have complained of fraud and conspiracy and injustice, as the Democrats now do. So, you see, each party has a plausible case." *

"ROSLYN, JULY 12th: † I went on the 26th of June to Easton, in Pennsylvania, and was present at the Commencement of Lafayette College. I was sent for, of course, and was piloted by Dr. Alden, the head of the Normal School at Albany. The occasion was, that among the prizes given out to the young men there was one called 'the Fowler prize,' which is given every year to the author of the best essay on the life and writings of some English author—that is, an author writing in the English language—whom the Faculty designates for that purpose. This year I and my writings were the subject, and the prize was an elegantly bound copy of my works, in eight volumes. I was called upon to present them, in the name of the college, to the winner of the prize, which I did with an apology for their want of merit. The essay I did not see, nor ask to see, but it was probably better than the subject. I wish you could have been at Easton to see the president of the college, Dr. Cattell—jolliest and gayest of all principals of such institutions, always jesting and smiling, fondling the students, as he does his children, and yet not losing their respect nor missing their obedience. The institution is quite popular. Last year it had three hundred and thirty-two students; the number of professors and other teachers is twenty-eight."

"NEW YORK, AUGUST 12th: ‡ By inspiration, which is the subject of your inquiries, I take for granted that you mean poetic inspiration, or the state of mind in which poetry of a high order is produced; that exaltation of the faculties in which high thoughts come into the mind and clothe themselves in apt words. I answer your questions in their order:

"*First.* I cannot say that in writing my poems I am directly conscious of the action of an outside intelligence on my mind, but I sometimes wonder whence the thoughts come, and they seem to me hardly my own. Sometimes in searching for that adequate expres-

* But the presumptions of fact and law were strongest on the side of the Democrats.

† To Miss C. Gibson. ‡ To Bronson C. Keeler.

sion it seems suddenly darted into my mind, like a ray of light into a dark room, and gives me a kind of surprise.

"*Second.* I don't invoke the Muse at all.

"*Third.* It appears to me that inspiration has no more to do with one intellectual process than another, and that, if there is such a thing, it might be present as directly in the solution of a problem of high mathematics as in a copy of verses.

"*Fourth.* I do not think the notion of inspiration to be a relic of ignorant superstition, though superstitious notions or beliefs may be connected with it, as in the case of the Delphic and other oracles of the ancients. Holding to the doctrine that there is a world of spirit as well as a world of matter, I am not prepared to say that there cannot be a direct action of mind upon mind without the interposition of a bodily presence—" (The rest wanting.)

"ROSLYN, NOVEMBER 17th:* I should be glad to celebrate in verse the seventieth return of John Greenleaf Whittier's birthday, if the thoughts and words fitting for such an occasion would come at call to be arranged in some poetic form, but I find that I must content myself with humble prose. Let me say, then, that I rejoice at the dispensation that has so long spared the world a poet whose life is as beautiful as his verse, who has occupied himself only with noble themes, and treated them nobly and grandly, and whose songs in the evening of life are as sweet and as thrilling as those of his vigorous meridian. If the prayers of those who delight in his poems shall be heard, that life will be prolonged in all its beauty and serenity for the sake of the world which is the better for his having lived, and far will be the day when all that we have of him will be his writings and his memory."

"ROSLYN, DECEMBER 10th:† I thank you for the good wishes with which you greet my birthday. I have certainly no objection to see a few more birthdays yet. As long as one's bodily and mental faculties are in pretty good preservation, and no disease is present, and no disgrace has fallen on one's character, life is a great blessing.

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* To Edward Abbott, editor of the "Literary World," Boston.

† To Miss C. Gibson.

I am grateful, for my part, for the easy and comfortable old age which has fallen to my lot. I heard two days since from Mr. Richard H. Dana, who has lately reached his ninetieth birthday, and whose mental faculties are in perfect preservation. He referred, in a letter which I had from him not long since, to an illness which he had suffered; but, on inquiry, I found that it was only a fall down a flight of stairs, in consequence of which he was laid up for some weeks. I am surprised that it has left him so strong, both in mind and body. When Rogers, the poet, was thrown out of his carriage and disabled, his mind began to suffer, for he could take no bodily exercise, and he lost his memory. Something like this happened to Josiah Quincy, who died at the age of ninety-two, and was a remarkably active and well-preserved old gentleman till he was disabled by being thrown from a carriage. What renders Mr. Dana's longevity a little curious is that he has all along been haunted by the apprehension that his life would be a short one. Emerson, they say, begins to feel the decays of age not only in physical but mental infirmity. It was given out last spring that he would make no more speeches in public, and now his memory fails sadly."

"NEW YORK, DECEMBER 5th: * I have every disposition to comply with your request, but my time of life is in the way. It is now the December of the year; it is with me the December of life. Who looks for Japan lilies and heliotropes when the ground is stiff with frost? If you were to go out into the garden on such an errand, your friends might desire to make you acquainted with the commissioner of lunacy. I will bear your application, however, in mind, and if I find a stray marigold in bloom, which I do not expect, I will send it."

In this same month a committee of the alumni of Williams College had requested him to write a poem for them, and he replied in a similar tone:

"'You ask me,' said he, 'for a few lines of verse to be read at your annual festival of the alumni at Williams College. I am ever ill at occasional verses. Such as it is, my vein is not of that sort. I find it difficult to satisfy myself. Besides, it is the December of life with

* To the editors of "Scribner's Monthly."

me. I try to keep a few flowers in pots—mere remembrances of a more genial season which is now with the things of the past. If I have a carnation or two for Christmas, I think myself fortunate. You write as if I had nothing to do, in fulfilling your request, but to go out and gather under the hedges and by the brooks a bouquet of flowers that spring spontaneously, and throw it upon your table. If I should try, what would you say, if it proved to be only a little bundle of devil-stalks and withered leaves, which my dim sight had mistaken for fresh, green sprays and blossoms? So I must excuse myself as well as I can, and content myself with wishing a very pleasant evening to the foster-children of old "Williams" who meet on New Year's Day, and all manner of prosperity and honor to the excellent institution of learning in which they are nurtured.'"

His little piece, "Our Fellow-Worshippers," written, as I suppose, in these closing years, would seem to show that the sweet and virile juices of poesy were not yet wholly drawn from his veins.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINTH.

THE LAST YEAR.

A. D. 1878.

It was remarked of Mr. Bryant in the last year of his life that he had never seemed more active and genial. His eighty-four years were not felt as a burden, in the discharge of either private or public duties. He walked daily to his office and back, a distance of nearly three miles. He spoke as usual at public meetings, as at the reception of Lord Dufferin by the Geographical Society; at the dinners given to Bayard Taylor, recently appointed Minister to Germany; before the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Children; and at a breakfast of clergymen of all denominations. Indeed, it was very curious, as not a few of his friends observed, how he had mellowed with time. The irritabilities of his earlier days had been wholly overcome; his reluctance to mingle with men was quite gone; and old age, which makes so many of us exacting and crabbed, if not morose, imparted to him additional gentleness and sweetness. He had learned to live more and more in the happiness of others, and was rewarded for his unconscious devotion by new streams of happiness constantly opening in his own bosom. His letters of the time, as may be seen by these specimens, were full of vivacity and cheerfulness.

"New York, February 2d:* What you say of your grandchildren reminds me of a fine passage in Virgil, where he speaks of Cy-

*To Mrs. L. M. S. Moulton, of Roslyn.

bele, the Berecynthian Mother, *Berecynthia Mater*, looking upon her posterity, and rejoicing in their multitude and their beauty. I have only Dryden's Virgil by me, and cannot find the place. I remember merely one of the lines of the English version—

"'A hundred sons, and every son a god.

"As the Olympian gods were immortal, and went on multiplying, it was easy to fill the heavens with the children of Cybele; but, even without that advantage, I do not see what is to prevent you from peopling Baltimore with your descendants. . . . On Thursday evening, which was a gloomy one, the Geographical Society had a meeting to discuss the question of an Arctic colony, an outpost of observation within 81° of north latitude, whence excursions could be made toward the north pole. There was a goodly company, and Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General of Canada, who has been in his yacht within the Arctic circle, was present, and was proposed by Bayard Taylor as an honorary member and elected. He answered in a graceful speech, thanking the members. Then he went to the annual Charity Ball, and opened it with Lady Sykes. Who she is I do not know, but he, you will remember, is the grandson of Sheridan, the orator, dramatist, and wit, and nephew of Mrs. Norton, the poetess."

Mr. Bryant's notoriety was not always a source of pleasure to him, and, writing to the same person, he discourses thus of the various annoyances to which he was exposed in consequence of it:

"New York, March 2d: Is there a penny post, do you think, in the world to come? Do people there write for autographs to those who have gained a little notoriety? Do women there send letters asking for money? Do boys persecute literary men with requests for a course of reading? Are there offices in that sphere which are coveted, and to obtain which men are pestered to write letters of recommendation? If anything of this kind takes place in the spirit world, it may, perhaps, be of a purgatorial nature, or, perhaps, be the fate of the incorrigible sinner. Here on earth this discipline never ends; and, if it exists at all in the other world, it is of a kind which will, of course, never cease. On this account I am inclined to believe that the punishment for sin may be of endless duration, for here the

annoyances and miseries which I have mentioned only cease with death, and in the other world, where there is no death, they will, of course, never come to an end.

"By the way, have you read the 'North American Review,' in which six doctors of divinity give their views of the future punishment of those who do not repent and amend their lives in this world? It is remarkable how the opinions of the clergy have changed upon that point within the last twenty years. I believe that the great majority of the ministers of the Episcopal Church in this country no longer hold that the misery which sin entails upon the wicked is endless. At all events, they no longer insist upon that point of doctrine, which, of course, they would do if they supposed it to be taught distinctly in the Scriptures.

"What beautiful weather we have, and what smiles old Winter puts on! There are no icicles on his chin this season, and the artist who now takes his portrait cannot represent him with a snow-white beard and silvery hair. He is a middle-aged gentleman, of lusty figure, and in a drab-colored suit. Do you suppose that we are to have such winters in the land to which we are going? Or are they to be a little more genial—enough so to bring out the flowers of paradise and to ripen the Hesperian apples?"

"NEW YORK, APRIL 10th:* I saw Bayard Taylor on Monday evening at the 'Commers' given him by the Germans of New York. He looked very much jaded, and expressed his sense of weariness in pretty strong terms. He will be glad to be on shipboard to-morrow. The symposium, called by the name I have given above, was a curious affair. It was offered Mr. Taylor by the German Social Science Association. There were five hundred people at fifteen tables, in an immense dining-hall, besides the Arion singers in the gallery, who, in the clouds of tobacco-smoke which ascended from the beer-drinkers below, looked like the gods on Olympus as they are sometimes seen in pictures. The president of the association, next to whom I sat, had an immensely long rapier, and the vice-president another, which they now and then, when the company were too noisy, brought down upon the table with a terrible thwack.

* To the same.

"Beer and cigars composed the bill of fare, and the exercises consisted of songs and speeches. The songs were given with a will. Only think of five hundred German throats letting out their voices at once! They drank the health of the Nestor of American poets, and the said Nestor thanked them in German, for all the speeches were in the German language. The beer was a very light tipple, and it seemed to me that one must toss off a good many pots of it before becoming tipsy. I am to go to a private dinner to-night, the last of the Taylor festivities."

"NEW YORK, MAY 2d:* Yesterday I was at a breakfast of the Clergymen's Club, an association of some forty Episcopal ministers of this place. There were several invited guests besides myself, among whom was Phillips Brooks, the Broad Church minister who makes so much stir in Boston; a man of gigantic size, towering head and shoulders above the tallest man at the board, and with a voice as soft and gentle as a zephyr. There was also the Presbyterian divine, Dr. Prentiss, who has just resigned his pastorate at Murray Hill, and who, being called up to speak, expressed his extreme delight at this meeting with his Episcopal brethren, and related several anecdotes of Julius Hare and others of the Anglican Church, with whom he had once passed some delightful days on a visit to England. A Dr. Fisher dwelt on the decline of intolerance among Christians of different denominations, and expressed a hope that in time the only strife between them would be the amicable contention as to which could do the most good, and best exemplify an obedience to the law of love. I was called up among the rest for a little speech, but no reporters for the press were allowed to be present, and so the fine things that were said will not come before the world."

Dr. Osgood, however, was able to recall the tenor of his remarks, and reported them as follows:

"I obey the call which is made upon me, although in doing so I reverse the ordinary mode of proceeding. It is the province of the clergy to address the laity, and here am I, a layman, rising to address the clergy. Yet as the sermon to the clergy—the *concio ad clerum*—is for one of their own cloth to deliver, I shall take care, in what little I say, not to preach.

* To Miss C. Gibson, of Edinburgh.

"When my friend Dr. Osgood told me the other day that if I accepted the invitation to this breakfast I would be called upon to say something, he was good enough to suggest as a subject the Christian poets of our language. This seemed a good suggestion; but, in going over the list of our poets who had treated largely of subjects connected with the Christian religion, I perceived that the two most eminent among them—Milton and Cowper—were laymen. If Wordsworth is to be included in the same class, and Coleridge besides, the author of that glorious 'Sunrise Hymn in the Valley of Chamouni,' they were laymen also. I was puzzled to know how to twist this circumstance into a compliment to the clergy whose guest I was to be, who had graciously offered me a seat with this reverend company, and to whom I naturally desired to say something pleasant. I went over the list of Christian poets who were clergymen, from the two Fletchers, Giles and Phineas, down to the present day, an illustrious brotherhood, but taking less lofty flights, and therefore belonging to the class of minor poets. It then occurred to me that in passages of their writings some of them had shown a genius which, if it had been guided principally in the direction of poetry, might have placed them in the class of their more eminent brethren. There is Young, a born poet if there ever was one, at whose torch Byron was wont to kindle his poetic fire. I cannot rank him with Cowper, for he had not the same delicate perception of beauty, the same just sense of symmetry and proportion, and the same affectionate observation of nature; but what fine passages he has! There is one which I have never seen selected for commendation, in which he imagined the gloomy spectre of the world before the flood sorrowing for a whole generation of mankind engulfed in the waters, and predicting another destruction, as general, by fire. Will you hear it?

"'But oh, Lorenzo, far above the rest,
Of ghastly feature and enormous size,
One form assaults my sight, and chills my blood,
And shakes my frame. Of one departed world
I see the mighty shadow; oozy wreath
And dismal sea-weed crown her. O'er her urn
Reclined she weeps her desolated realms
And her drowned sons, and, weeping, prophesies
Another's dissolution, soon, in flames.'

"What a fine poem, short as it is, is that of Croly on the 'Genius of Death' as represented on an ancient gem!

"'Spirit of the drooping wing
And the ever weary eye!
Thou of all earth's kings art king;
Empires at Thy footstool lie;
Before thee strewed,
Their multitude
Sink like waves upon the shore;
Storms can never rouse them more.'

There is yet another stanza quite as fine, but I cannot repeat it."

He then went on with other passages, from other writers, quoting from memory, and concluded thus:

"These and other passages in the works of poets who were of the clergy led me to the true solution of the problem that had perplexed me. I reflected that one important part of a clergyman's duty was the delivery of sermons, and that when a striking thought, a grand idea, a conception capable of the highest poetic expression, came into his mind, he had an immediate use for it. I perceived that he needed it to enforce the message he had to deliver. Instead of employing the time which should be given to parochial duties in the task of giving these high thoughts a poetic form, for their preservation, the faithful clergyman takes them into the pulpit with him, and launches them at the audience winged with the living voice. He disinterestedly sacrifices future fame to present usefulness; his reputation as a poet to his duty as a preacher."

"NEW YORK, MAY 18th:* I cannot be present at the meeting called to organize the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, but I am glad that such a movement is on foot, and wish it the fullest success. There is an attempt to make science, or a knowledge of the laws of the material universe, an ally of the school which denies a separate spiritual existence and a future life; in short, to borrow of science

* To the Rev. Dr. John H. Vincent, in answer to an invitation to attend a meeting of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

weapons to be used against Christianity. The friends of religion, therefore, confident that one truth never contradicts another, are doing wisely when they seek to accustom the people at large to think and to weigh evidence, as well as to believe. By giving a portion of their time to a vigorous training of the intellect and a study of the best books, men gain the power to deal satisfactorily with questions with which the mind might otherwise become bewildered. It is true that there is no branch of human knowledge so important as that which teaches the duties that we owe to God and to each other; and that there is no law of the universe—sublime and wonderful as it may be—so worthy of being fully known as the law of love, which makes him who obeys it a blessing to his species, and the universal observance of which would put an end to a large proportion of the evils which affect mankind; yet is a knowledge of the results of science, and such of its processes as are most open to the popular mind, important for the purpose of showing the different spheres occupied by science and religion, and preventing the inquirer from mistaking their divergence from each other for opposition.

"I perceive this important advantage in the proposed organization, namely, that those who engage in it will mutually encourage each other. It will give the members a common pursuit, which always begets a feeling of brotherhood; they will have a common topic of conversation and discussion, and the consequence will be that many who, if they stood alone, might soon grow weary of the studies which are recommended to them, will be incited to perseverance by the interest which they see others taking in them. It may happen in rare instances that a person of eminent mental endowments, which otherwise might have remained uncultivated and unknown, will be stimulated in this manner to diligence, and put forth unexpected powers, and, passing rapidly beyond the rest, become greatly distinguished and take a place among the luminaries of the age. I shall be interested in watching, during the little space of life that may yet remain to me, the progress and results of the plan which has drawn from me this letter."

On the 16th of April Mr. Bryant wrote to Mr. Dana thus:

"I was very glad, the other day, to see your once familiar handwriting again. I hear of you now and then from Boston people, or

those who have visited Boston, and generally hear of you as one on whom age has laid its hand gently. You are fortunate in your posterity, which are multiplying around you. As the old song goes, you go wooing and getting married in your grandchildren. It must be a great unhappiness to have and to see about one a brood of degenerate and worthless descendants. Yours are of a different class, and to know that must take away from old age somewhat of the dreary feeling of solitariness which creeps over us when we see our contemporaries taking leave of us on the right hand and the left. . . . When I was asked who should be Secretary of State, I said—Richard H. Dana, Jr. We have had in this latitude the pleasantest winter that I have experienced in the Northern States—mild, sunny, free from ice and snow; so genial, so steady in its temperature, that one might think himself transported to a more benign latitude—and healthy, too—very healthy until quite lately. The Board of Health has been bestirring itself lately—peeping into the water-closets, and setting the owners of houses to repairing and putting in order the pipes that lead to the sewers. The doctors are ascribing almost every disease to unwholesome gases, and call almost every ailment 'malarial.' Good drainage is all the fashion, and I hope everything from it next summer, when the Board of Health has persuaded everybody to put their sewer-pipes in order, the bad air from which of late has poisoned us all, and which grows worse and worse the higher we build and the smaller the space into which we compress our population.

"The spring calls me to Roslyn, but Julia is not well enough to go, being not fully recovered from an attack of what the doctors call a 'malarial' fever. She thinks of making a visit to a place not far from Philadelphia, called, absurdly, Atlantic City—where the good air cures everybody. But how beautiful the country is in this neighborhood!—the bright green grass, the young leaves of the trees, the blossoms in the grass and on the shrubs. I long to be among them.

"Yours faithfully and immemorially."

This was the close of a correspondence begun when the parties to it were both young, and continued until the one was in his eighty-fourth and the other his ninety-sixth year. "I long to be among the blossoms of the grass," said Mr. Bryant, little thinking how soon he would be among them in

a very different sense from that in which he wrote. He went early to Roslyn and busied himself with his books and his plants. On the 27th of May, having received from Mr. R. H. Stoddard a poem of which his opinion was asked, he wrote this — which was, I think, his last letter — still showing, as in the days when he had looked over the manuscripts of Dana and Hillhouse, his willingness to serve a brother poet:

"Roslyn, May 27th: I like your poem much, and am charmed with its beautiful ending. You ask for my criticism. It will not be of much value; but, since you desire it, I will point out a few places where I would make a change if I were the author.

"Stanza III.—'Their hearts rebellious cried'—an unpleasant inversion if rebellious be an adjective, and not very good grammar if it be an adverb. 'Rebelling' would be better, *me judice*.

"Stanza V.—Two 'fors' in two successive lines.

"Stanza VI.—'And other horsemen.' If for 'other' one were to substitute some adjective in the comparative degree, as '*fiercer*,' it would give the passage more force.

"Stanza X.—'Would never have permitted it so long' seems to me prosaic.

"Stanza XIII.—'Such strength as you displayed.' 'Displayed' for 'put forth,' or some such word, is not quite right.

"Stanza XVI.—'Superstructures.' I should have preferred 'structures,' with some alteration of the stanza to give it the required length.

"Same Stanza.—'And batter against.' Why not 'beat'?

"Stanza XIX.—Second line, something omitted.

"Stanza XXII.—'Produces' for 'brings forth.'

"Stanza XIX.—Another phrase in this stanza which I do not like is, 'and all triumphal strains.' I do not quite see its pertinency.

"There is in Stanza IV a grammatical slip, 'the hand of God was *lain*.'

"You see that, although I have read your poem several times over, I have gleaned very little in the way of objection, and nothing as to the thought or plan, which is excellent. Looking again at Stanza V, the line, 'And all men have submitted to his reign,' strikes me as

wanting in force. If the meaning were extended to every living thing, it seems to me that something would be gained in vigor of expression. But the blemishes I have noted are trivial ones, and all of them may not seem such to others. Faithfully yours, W. C. B."

The day before this letter was written, Sunday, 26th, Mr. Bryant went to church as usual, but it was observed by a neighbor that his face, always meditative and somewhat sad, was unusually absorbed in thought. Could it have been as he had written of Schiller,

"—that even then he trod
The threshold of the world unknown,
Already from the seat of God
A ray upon his garments shone"?

Of this last Sunday, Dr. John Ordronaux, a highly valued and accomplished friend, who occupied a cottage on his place, has furnished me this account:

"Mr. Bryant took his last Sunday dinner with us. He was not feeling well at the time, and complained of a cold in the head which affected his eyes and otherwise depressed him. He had just returned from church, and his first remarks as he entered the library were in the form of regrets that his pastor had selected for the instruction of the people those psalms in which David utters the bitterest denunciations against his enemies. He said that it pained him to hear such expressions read from the pulpit, as they were calculated to leave an impression of their justification in many minds, arising from the sacredness of the source. He thought that, as hatred of one's enemies formed no part of the duty of man, but was in direct contravention of the teachings of the New Testament, it was improper to read such utterances as lessons in the course of divine worship. These complaints were made in a tone of mingled pity and sorrow, showing how deeply he had been touched by the incidents accompanying his last visit, as it proved to be, to the house of God. It was some time before these shadows were dispelled from his feelings and he seemed able to resume his wonted equanimity.

"We had as a visitor on that day a lady of rare culture and endow-

ments, and, as she had never met Mr. Bryant, a brilliant interchange of thoughts was speedily invited by her, through certain incisive remarks with which she opened the conversation. Her naturalness of manner and keenness of observation pleased him at once, and that reserve by which he usually protected himself against strangers whom he suspected of a desire to lionize him was immediately dissipated. He became genial and communicative to such a degree as to fascinate us all with the exuberance of his criticisms upon the men he had met and the countries he had visited. At eighty-four the springs of genius flowed in him as clear as the flashing waters of that peerless fountain described by Ovid in his 'Metamorphoses,' which

> '—produced nor shining ooze, nor weeds,
> Nor miry rushes, nor the spiky reeds,
> But dealt enriching moisture all around,
> And kept the Spring eternal on the ground.'

"Before dinner I brought him a copy of his poems and asked, as a favor, an account of some of the most prominent ones in relation to their origin and structure. This seemed to gratify him, and he cheerfully replied to all our questions in these particulars. 'Thanatopsis' being naturally among those we were most anxious to know about, he marked in the copy before him the original limits of the poem, and the additions subsequently made by him. In the same way he told us of 'The Ages,' the lines 'To a Waterfowl,' 'The Death of the Flowers,' and 'The Forest Hymn,' while over his head at the time were hanging leaves from the grand old trees at Cummington, under whose shadows sixty years before he had drawn the inspiration of these immortal rhymes.

"At dinner he regaled us with the experiences of his foreign travel in England, France, Spain, Italy, and the East, and with sketches of the poets and scholars he had met in his wanderings, many of them the most illustrious of the century. In these sketches he was overflowing with quotations from their writings, appearing to have familiarized himself with their inner sentiments as well as with their outward life. Mr. Bryant could not endure either hypocrisy or affectation in men. Whatever might be their position in the world of letters or politics, or whatever their genius, he was equally cold and judicial in pronouncing judgment upon them. You could not persuade him

into lenity at the expense of justice. When once his sense of right was outraged he might tolerate the offender, but he could never forget the offence. I had often seen him in his best moods, but never saw him so unfold his inner graces of poetical sensibility and the wealth of his intellectual possessions as he did then. We all remarked upon the happy, genial flow of spirits which animated both his conversation and the tones of his voice. Contrary to his custom, he tarried far into the afternoon, and, when the hour of parting came, it fell upon all with a regret as deep as it was sincere. Looking back to those hours across the grave in which but a few days after we laid him, I cannot divest myself of the thought that, by one of those unconscious acts of prescience which no philosophy can solve, he intuitively felt himself approaching some grand crisis in his life. A number of incidents occurring then and on the morrow, trivial apparently in themselves, and yet capable of being woven into a chain of circumstantial evidence, have moved me to the conviction that he was aware of a shadow brooding over his inner life whose portent he had not yet interpreted.

"When he took his departure I offered to accompany him to his home, and we walked together over his favorite path by the shores of the bay. For a while we proceeded in silence, when he began sneezing, and said he must take a powder which Dr. Gray had prescribed for his cold, remarking at the same time that he was not well, and, his voice suddenly falling into a saddened tone, he said, with a sigh: 'Oh! I wish they would excuse me from delivering that Mazzini oration. I don't feel equal to it. But, having done so much in behalf of other noted men, I don't see how I can well refuse doing for the Italians what I have for other nations.' To this I made reply that at his age, and with the obligations under which he had placed the public by discourses of this kind, he could with very good grace decline. 'I can't do that now,' he replied. 'If you knew how I am followed up by people of every class asking for this and that kind of service, you would appreciate how I am tormented. I have no rest from this kind of importunity, and, having obliged one set of people, I can't well refuse another. Besides, Mazzini was a patriot, and Italy owes to him a large share of her independence. But,' said he, with a deep sigh, 'I shall stop now.' The subject was thereupon dropped, and we proceeded in silence for some distance. I opened the conversation anew by saying

that I hoped he had come out to stay, when, in the saddest of voices, he said, slowly: 'I wish my daughter were at home; I am very lonesome without her. I do not like to be in the city. This is my home, and here I should like to stay.' He then changed to some private matters which seemed to burden his heart, and, repeating certain painful business experiences, he suddenly checked himself as if conscious that he was revealing phases of mental distress which he should conceal. For some moments before reaching the old mansion he had not spoken. He seemed to be wrapped in thought, occasionally pausing to examine a shrub in blossom or some young tree that arrested his attention. Knowing that these were always objects of affectionate interest to him, I did not venture to break the silence. At last he ascended the steps of the porch, and, taking the door-key from his pocket, he said, beseechingly: 'Won't you come in? You see how lonesome I am! Do come in!' I excused myself on the plea of an engagement at home, remarking that he ought not to feel lonesome in so beautiful a spot, and in his favorite season of buds and blossoms. 'True,' he replied, 'Nature is always beautiful; we should not complain in the midst of her bounties, and, besides, we cannot go where universal love smiles not around, from seeming evil still educing good.' These were the last words I heard him utter. I took his hand and said 'Good-by!' and, as I went down the path toward the pond, I turned and saw him standing bareheaded, with his face toward the sparkling waters of the bay, his white locks and beard just moved by the passing breeze, and he looking like one of the Bards of the Bible in the rapture of devotion, or, better still, as the impersonation of Homer himself listening to the murmuring waves of his own blue Ægean."

On Wednesday morning (29th) he repaired to the city, and spent the forenoon in his office, mainly in correcting proofs. Mr. Eggleston, the literary editor of the "Evening Post," in some reminiscences, says:

"On the morning of that sad day he came into my room with two poems sent to him by a person whom he knew, and asked me to read them. I did so, and found them to be extremely poor stuff. 'I supposed so,' he said; 'and now I shall have to write to her on the subject. People expect too much of me—altogether too much.' It was

like a wail; and, when the news of his fall and of his illness came, the words rang in my ears with a terrible sadness.

The conversation that morning was the longest I ever had with him, and it was one which would have no little value to the public if I might here report it in full. I had always taken pains to profit by his casual comments upon literature and literary subjects, for, although his tenderness always restrained him from writing criticisms, our literature has had no sounder, no more acute, no more wisely appreciative critic than he. On that fatal morning something in our conversation brought up the subjects of American literature and American criticism, and he talked for nearly an hour in review of the whole field, classifying and arranging the different branches of the subject as skilfully as he would have done it in an essay, and expressing some unconventional opinions which startled me by their vigorous originality, and by the apparent care with which they had been wrought out in his mind. His conversation was a critical history of American literature in miniature, and some of the opinions expressed would shock that class of critics whose admiration of anything American is tempered by a truly Nazarene conviction of the unworthiness of Nazareth."

Mr. Bryant partook of a slight luncheon at mid-day, and soon after was driven in his own carriage to Central Park, where a statue was to be raised to Mazzini, the Italian author and patriot. A great crowd was already gathered. The day was warm, and the sun shone so brightly when he advanced to make his address that a friend insisted upon holding an umbrella over him; he spoke feebly at first, but with more animation as he began the impassioned paragraph with which he closed. It was an apostrophe to the impersonation of Civil and Religious Liberty:

"Image of the illustrious champion of civil and religious liberty, cast in enduring bronze to typify the imperishable renown of thy original! Remain for ages yet to come where we place thee, in this resort of millions; remain till the day shall dawn—far distant though it may be—when the rights and duties of human brotherhood shall be acknowledged by all the races of mankind."

These were the last words he was destined to address to his fellow-men. In speaking them he stepped forth and stood with his uncovered head exposed to the full glare of the sunlight. When he ceased speaking it was observed by a great many persons present that he seemed weak and exhausted, and he should have been allowed to depart for his home at once. But a gentleman with whom he had a slight acquaintance, General James Grant Wilson, invited him to go to his house, at a considerable distance across the Park. He accepted the invitation, and it is said that as he walked along he conversed about the statues, the trees, the birds, and other objects, in a chatty way, particularly with a little girl, a daughter of Mr. Wilson, whom he questioned as to her knowledge of the names of birds and trees. Going up the steps of the house, Mr. Wilson went forward to open the door; but he had scarcely done so when Mr. Bryant fell directly backward, and struck his head with some degree of violence upon the stone of the steps. A gentleman who was passing in the street saw the accident, and hastened to offer his services; at the same time the servants of the house appeared, and Mr. Bryant was carried into the parlor and laid on a sofa in a state of insensibility. Mrs. Wilson had some ice-water brought, with which she bathed his head. The sufferer murmured "Don't!" but exhibited no signs of consciousness. He at last recovered enough to sit up, and a glass of iced sherry was offered him, which he drank. This seemed to revive him a good deal, and he put his hand to his head, moaning, "My head! my poor head! I don't feel well." Mr. Wilson suggested his going upstairs to bed, and asked where his medical adviser could be found; but all offers of assistance were declined. The one thought that seemed to possess his mind was that of getting home.

He was taken down town in a Madison Avenue car as far as Seventeenth Street, where a passing cab was hailed, and he was driven directly to his house, No. 24 West Sixteenth Street. During all this time he would use connected sentences in con-

versation, but lapses would occur in his train of thought, and his attention would wander for a minute or two.

Arrived at his home, he looked curiously at the house, and up and down the street. "Whose house is this?" "What street is this?" he inquired, apparently unwilling to enter a place so unfamiliar to him without an explanation. The servant did not answer the summons of the door-bell at once, and, with a movement which had evidently become mechanical through habit, Mr. Bryant put his hand into his pocket, drew out a latch-key, and opened the door himself. Passing through the parlor into the dining-room, the maid-servant advanced toward them, when Mr. Bryant looked dreamily at her a moment, then turned to Mr. Wilson and inquired: "Would you like to see Miss Fairchild?"—a niece who lived with him. As soon as she entered the room it was decided that his family physician, Dr. John F. Gray, should be sent for, and Mr. Bryant was removed upstairs to his library, where he was left for a moment in the care of a servant, to whom he gave some orders, and then fell into a half unconscious state. Dr. Gray, on his arrival, called Dr. Carnochan, the surgeon, into consultation; a careful examination, however, having discovered no cut or contusion on the patient's head, and the disorder having been decided to be concussion of the brain, Dr. Paine was called in, upon whom, jointly with Dr. Gray, thereafter devolved the entire conduct of the case. Dr. Gray was of the opinion that Mr. Bryant's fall caused an injury of the brain, from which he at no time expected the recovery of his patient. This injury was such that a younger and a stronger man could scarcely have survived it. The swoon preceding the fall was caused by a diminution or interruption of the action of the heart or of the respiratory organs. "Mr. Bryant, during the first few days, would get up and walk about the library, or sit in his favorite chair. He would occasionally say something about diet and air. When his daughter Julia arrived from Atlantic City, where she had been for her health, she thought her father recognized

her, but it is uncertain how far he recognized her, or any of his friends. The family were hopeful, and made the most out of every sign of consciousness or recognition. On the eighth day after the fall, hæmorrhage took place in the brain, resulting in paralysis, technically called hemiplegia, which extended down the right side of the body. After this he was most of the time comatose. He was unable to speak, and, when he attempted to swallow, his food lodged in his larynx and choked him. He was greatly troubled with phlegm, and could not clear his throat. There was only that one attack of hæmorrhage of the brain, and that was due to what is called traumatic inflammation." *

Mr. Bryant lingered for fourteen days in this twilight state between life and death, when, at half-past five in the morning of June 12th, he fell into a sleep and passed away. The report of his death produced a general expression of sorrow; all classes of the people seemed to feel spontaneously that they had lost one who was, as he had often been called, "the first citizen of the republic." By order of the Mayor, the flags of the city were ordered at half-mast upon the public buildings; the journals were filled with biographies, reminiscences, and comments; draped portraits of

"The good gray head, which all men knew,"

were hung in the shop-windows; and the various societies and clubs were called together to take appropriate action.

The funeral, which occurred on Friday, June 14th, was extremely simple. No services were held at the house, but the body was carried to All Souls Church, where the poet had long worshipped. An immense concourse of people, including not only the most distinguished residents of the city — judges of courts, clergymen, professors, literary men, merchants, and artists — but many of the common ranks, filled and surrounded the edifice. The coffin, covered with

* From Dr. Gray's report.

black cloth and mounted with silver, bore a plate with the inscription, "William Cullen Bryant. Born November 3, 1794. Died June 12, 1878." Resting on the coffin was a spray of palm-leaves, fastened together by a knot of white ribbon, "from those he employed, who loved him." Two large baskets of flowers were upon the communion table, and on the baptismal font was a beautiful floral pillar. Among the members of Mr. Bryant's family present were Messrs. John H. Bryant and Arthur Bryant, who, although telegraphed for, did not arrive from Illinois in time to see their brother alive; Miss Julia Bryant, his youngest daughter; Bryant, Harold, Minna, Nora, and Fanny Godwin, his grandchildren; and Miss Fairchild, his niece. Mrs. Godwin, his elder daughter, travelling with her husband in Europe, received the sad intelligence too late to admit of her returning to pay the last duties of a life-long love and reverence.

The services began with a prelude on the organ, the selection being the andante from Beethoven's seventh symphony. This was followed by the singing of Rooke's "Rest, spirit, rest." The Rev. Dr. Bellows read the King's chapel service for the dead, and then offered prayer. After the hymn, "Come unto Him," by Handel, Dr. Bellows delivered a brief but sympathetic address.

"The whole country is bending with us," he said, "over the bier that holds the dust of Bryant! Private as the simple service is that consigns the ashes of our illustrious poet and journalist to the grave, there is public mourning in all hearts and homes, making these funeral rites solemn and universal by the sympathy that from every quarter flows toward them, and swells the current of grateful and reverent emotion. Much as the modest, unworldly spirit of the man we mourn shrunk from the parade of public rites, leaving to his heirs the duty of a rigid simplicity in his funeral, neither his wishes nor theirs could render his death and burial less than an event of general significance and national concern. It is not for his glory that we honor and commemorate him. Public fame, for more than half a century, has made it needless, or impossible, to add one laurel to his crown. So long

ago he took the place he has since kept in public admiration, respect, and reverence, that no living tongue could now dislodge or add to the security and splendor of his reputation. For three generations he has been a fixed star in our firmament, and no eulogy could be so complete as that which by accumulation of meaning dwells in the simple mention of his name."

Dr. Bellows spoke concisely, but with discrimination, of the merits of the poet and writer, but dwelt with particular fervor and fondness on the character of the man. The key to his whole career, and to the earnest affection and reverence which, without having achieved any signal external results that seize and impress the imagination, he everywhere excited, was found in his unswerving and disinterested love of human freedom.

"Sympathy with our common humanity," said the speaker, "was in him a religious passion. He had a constitutional love of freedom, and an intense sentiment of justice, and they constituted together his political creed and policy. He believed in freedom, and this made him a friend of the oppressed, an enemy of slavery, a foe to special and class legislation, an advocate of free-trade—a natural Democrat, though born and reared in a Federal community that looked with suspicion upon extensions of the suffrage and upon the growth of local and State rights. But his love of freedom was too genuine to allow him to condone the faults even of his own party, when freedom's friends were found on the other side. He could bear, he *did* bear, the odium of his unpopular convictions, when what was called the best society in New York was of another opinion and belonged to another party; and he could bear with equal fortitude the ignominy of lacking party fidelity, when his patriotic spirit felt that his old political friends were less faithful than they should be to freedom and union."

At the close of the address Dr. Bellows repeated the touching lines of the poet on the month of June, when the choir sang one of his own hymns:

"Oh, deem not they are blest alone
Whose lives a peaceful tenor keep."

The Lord's Prayer having been recited in unison by the pastor and the congregation, Dr. Bellows announced that the body would be conveyed to Roslyn for burial.

The special train, consisting of two passenger cars, left Hunter's Point at one o'clock P. M. It carried, besides the immediate family of the deceased, many of his more intimate friends, his colleagues of the journal, and representatives of different societies. Arrived at Roslyn, the coffin was taken to the beautiful cemetery of the village, which overlooks the waters of Long Island Sound. The day was bright and cheerful; a gentle breeze murmured in the foliage of the woods which shade the cemetery, and the birds chirruped their sweetest melodies. Thus, as he had wished sixty years before, the old poet was laid away.

> "Where, through the long, long summer hours,
> The golden light shall lie,
> And thick young herbs and groups of flowers
> Stand in their beauty by.
> The oriole shall build and tell
> His love-tale close beside his cell;
> The idle butterfly
> Shall rest him there, and there be heard
> The housewife bee and humming-bird."

A selection of lines from his own poems, made by his brother John, was read at the grave, which the little children of the schools, who had often shared his hospitality and romped upon his lawns in the season of fruits, filled with flowers. He reposes by the side of the wife on whose tomb he had caused to be inscribed the tribute that she was "an humble disciple of Christ, exemplary in every relation of life, affectionate, sympathetic, sincere, and ever occupied with the welfare of others." On the same shaft his own name now appears, with the dates of his birth and his death.

CHAPTER FIFTIETH.

COMMEMORATIVE APPRECIATIONS.

THE closing of a life, which had been lengthened to within sixteen years of a century, full of varied experiences and good deeds, naturally excited a great deal of observation and comment. Apart from the obituaries of the journals, at home and abroad, extending in some cases through many columns, the pulpit abounded in expositions of the moral lessons to be drawn from the incidents of such a career, and many of the learned societies of which Mr. Bryant was an associate* paid their tributes of respect, in addresses by eminent members, to the memory of his virtues, talents, and services.

These addresses were, for the most part, from the nature of the occasion, eulogistic, making no pretension as philosophic estimates of Mr. Bryant's career, or as critical analyses of his genius, and dwelling mainly on the external events of his life; and yet they were sufficiently just and discriminating to furnish us with a fair conception of his character and of the impression it had made upon the minds of his contemporaries. What is said of a man by those who knew him intimately is doubtless a part of his history; and though time

* He was an honorary member of nearly all the historical societies of the several States, of many philosophical, geographical, antiquarian, statistical, and other associations, of several of the academies of artists, and of a hundred and more of the literary societies of the colleges.

may correct the exaggerations, and lessen or widen, as it may be, the bases of the judgments, they possess a value as monuments of opinion at the time in which they were uttered.

The Rev. R. C. Waterston, addressing the Massachusetts Historical Society, at a meeting called for the purpose, June 13, 1878,* said:

"Mr. Bryant was a scholar, yet his life was not passed either in studious retirement, or even, in a scholastic way, among books. He was familiar with various languages, ancient and modern, retaining with critical exactness his classical knowledge, yet his hours were habitually occupied with the practical business of the time, political economy, finance, and the changing aspects of national affairs. He was an ardent lover of Nature, yet his days were, for the most part, associated with the crowded thoroughfares of a populous city. His poetry was generally calm and contemplative, yet he was in daily contact with the most exciting controversies of the period, the contentions of conflicting parties, and the agitating questions that threatened to disturb communities, and even to divide the nation. It was not so much what he was in any one phase of his character as in the perfect balance of all his powers, the manner in which every faculty was brought into harmonious action, and the noble spirit with which they were uniformly and persistently devoted to the public good.

"We may have had elsewhere as faithful citizens; as industrious journalists; as ripe scholars; and poets, it may be, equally gifted and inspired, but where have we had another who has combined in his own person all these? In him a rare combination of extraordinary qualities was united: strength and gentleness, elevation of thought and childlike simplicity, genius, common-sense, and practical wisdom. Where there were controverted questions, whether men agreed with him or not, they never for an instant doubted his nobleness of purpose. It was universally acknowledged that his integrity was as immovable as a mountain of adamant; and that, in all his efforts, he had no motive less elevated than the public good."

* Mr. Waterston's address, which dwelt lovingly upon Mr. Bryant's domestic and religious traits, was printed but not published.

Dr. Samuel Osgood, at a memorial meeting of the Goethe Club, October 30th, when addresses were also made by Dr. Ruppaner, the president, and by Mr. T. B. Wakeman, said:

"As a poet he kept his hold of his countrymen, and he strengthened it not by any new and startling bursts of genius, but by keeping the old ground and growing from the old root. His poetry widened its range, ripened its beauty and sweetened its humanity, and exalted its faith; but it did not change its essential type of calm meditation and descriptive art. New subjects came into his field of vision in his new home, while he kept open his old base of supplies of rural images from the fields and woods and rivers and hills of his early days. His verse feels the power of the near ocean, and speaks as neighbor to the Western prairie; it stirs with the rush of the waters of the noble Hudson, and is not unmindful of the rush of human life in the currents of noble Broadway. He catches the pulse-beat of the great nations here, and answers to it in translations of choice gems of the French, Spanish, German, and Portuguese muse, and in original odes to the genius of Dante and Schiller. He does not forget Nature, and his exquisite studies of the flowers and the seasons, the clouds and stars and winds and woods, the seas and mountains, grow into such completeness that a Bryant Year of Nature might rival in beauty and favor Keble's 'Christian Year.' Yet life, in its struggle and pressure, came in for its share of his thought, and his later poems deepen in pathos for human grief, and sometimes ring with enthusiasm for patriotism and humanity. Religion becomes a more positive conviction and emotion, and what is sometimes said of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the last of the great Stoics, may be said with added meaning of him. It was said of Marcus Aurelius that he brought stoicism so near to Christianity that after him it died out and Christianity took its place. In Bryant the change was made before his death, and his poems are the record that in his life he passed from the Stoic into the Christian, and so embodied the lessons of ages in his experience.

"Yet his poetry kept its essential intellectual type, and did not glow with passion or burn with martial fire. He had neither epic fulness, nor dramatic compass and force. This is but saying that he belonged to his own time and people and school and temperament; for the New England that schooled him was essentially intellectual

and meditative in its literature, and even in theology it reasoned out Heaven and Hell by calm logic, and left passion and force to other and more worldly fields. He was in his way scholastic in his poetry, a disciple of his own set school; and with his wonderful sense of beauty he never ventures to lose his calmness or in any way to be unwise. He never said a foolish thing, and rarely, if ever, did an unwise one. Even love, which makes so many men fools, made him thoughtful; and his one sacred love went forth in calm idyls and rose into godly hymns, and never burned with wasting fires. Yet this we may and must say in truth of the calmness of his verse and of a certain want of the will element in his muse, that his active life made up for that want. His life was epic and drama too, true to the supreme justice that follows the Epos of Providence, and brave for the sovereign right that works out and fights out the Ethos of mankind. We must look to him as to the patriot and the man in order to appreciate the worth of the ideal expression and force that he gave, and to show that poetry is not word only, but action also.

"His poetry was little personal, and, shy of men and women, he was more at home, especially in early life, with Nature. Herein he differs signally from Goethe, who always delighted in persons, and who put his whole poetic and ideal experience into such personal forms as Werther, Faust, and Wilhelm Meister. 'Faust,' Goethe's masterpiece, and the great poem of modern times since 'Hamlet,' is not only Goethe himself, but the modern man as Thinker under trial from Passion, Doubt, and Care, and as Conqueror by the Spirit of Beauty and the power of Action. Bryant did not put himself and his age into any such ideal embodiment. He saw much of the modern man, and lived the modern life, but not as Goethe did. He was the new Puritan, the modern Independent in face of Death, Tyranny, and Superstition. Conqueror by the charm of Nature, and by the power of Faith and Duty. This Puritan Greek lived out his idea grandly, and he did not dramatize it, as Goethe dramatized his. Bryant apparently did not have a hard struggle with passion as Goethe did, but he knew Doubt and Care, and conquered them. If he was not compelled to fight hard with the flesh, he saw something of the world and the devil. How could he help it, all those fifty years here in this tumult —and his victory was constant, noble, and inspiring. If he did not put the poem of his life into verse, he left the materials as a legacy to

us, and Time is already beginning to shape these materials into form and to breathe into them a soul. The Puritan Greek is the name of that life-poem. . . .

"His gentleness was mated with strength that marked his character, and looked out from his face. He was a very mild, unpretending man, and not commanding in stature, yet it was hard to resist the impression of his having a certain grandeur of form as of spirit, and artists generally overdrew his figure and his face. It was not accident, but a certain inherent dignity, that made them do this. His intimate friends revered him, and they who knew him well and saw him often and freely as I—some fifteen years his pastor and always his friend—did for some thirty years, never presumed to any light familiarity with him, and they would not put their hand on his shoulder fondly, although any playful and confiding child might do so, and not be rebuked. This impression followed him to the last. On his death-bed, the day before he died, when I offered at his bedside the prayer for the dying, which I knew that he loved, his head had the look of a Titan; and when it sank in the repose of death, and a few favored friends were admitted to the sacred presence, his face, in its exquisite lines and noble features and silvery radiance, was as one of God's own shining ones, angelic in sweetness and spirituality. That face is ours, and it belongs to our country. It is everywhere with the faces of Washington and Franklin, and no effort or neglect of man can tear it out of the treasures of art and the custody of affection."

At a memorial meeting of the Century Club, November 12th, where commemorative poems by Bayard Taylor, E. C. Stedman, and Richard H. Stoddard, full of affectionate reverence and poetic beauty, were read, Mr. Bigelow, an editorial associate and life-long friend, spoke chiefly of Mr. Bryant's journalistic labors and private virtues. He said:

"From this time forth (1826), and until the close of his long life, a period of fifty-two years, and covering the administrations of nine Presidents, Mr. Bryant continued in the editorship of the 'Evening Post.' He never engaged in any other business enterprise; he never embarked in any financial speculations; he was never an officer of

any other financial or industrial corporation; nor did he ever accept any political office or trust. He had found an employment at last that was entirely congenial to him, and one, as Dr. Bellows has wisely said, which 'most fully economized his temperament and faculties for the public service'; and he was as loyal to his profession as it was to him. I think it quite safe to say that for five days out of every week during at least forty-two of his fifty-two years of editorial service, Mr. Bryant was at his editorial desk before eight o'clock in the morning, and left the daily impress of his character and genius in some form upon the columns of his journal. When the length of his career as editor is considered, it may be assumed that Mr. Bryant was one of the most voluminous prose writers that ever lived, and, to this audience I need hardly add, one of the best. It would be difficult to name a single topic of national importance, or which has occupied any considerable share of public attention during the last half century, upon which Bryant did not find occasion to form and publish an opinion—an opinion, too, which always commanded the respect, if not the adhesion, of his readers.

"Though journalism is a comparatively modern profession, it is already divided into schools, two of which are well defined. One aims to daguerrotype the events and humors of the day, whatever they may be; the other, to direct and shape those events and humors to special standards. One is merely a reflector of what passes across its field; the other, a lens converging the news of the day, like the rays of light, in specific directions. One is the school of the real, and the other of the ideal. A journal of the former class, of which the 'London Times' and the 'New York Herald' are perhaps the most distinguished specimens to-day, is essentially an ephemeron. Each day's publication is complete, having no necessary dependence upon any publication preceding or to follow it. It is simply the living body of that portion of time which has elapsed since its previous issue. It masquerades with its readers in the idolatry or passion of to-day, and to-morrow, perhaps, with them it clothes itself in the sackcloth and ashes of repentance. The other school aims to control and direct society; to teach and to lead it; to tell not so much what it has been doing as what it ought to do or to have done. As such it must be consistent with itself, and teach its doctrines in their purity, irrespective of the fluctuations of public opinion. It was to the latter school

of journalism that Mr. Bryant belonged. The amelioration of society was the warp with which he was always striving to interweave the woof of current events.

"I will not undertake to say which of these two schools of journalism is the more useful. Both are useful; neither can be spared; but they invite very different orders of mind and a very different range of accomplishments. I doubt if the school to which Mr. Bryant belonged, and of which Coleridge and Southey were conspicuous ornaments in their earlier years, ever had his superior; if it ever had a pen in its service which wrote so admirably, as much that was sound and profitable, with so little that was neither sound nor profitable.

. . . . . .

"As Bryant, from the day he embarked in journalism, continued a journalist until the close of his life, from a yet earlier period of his life to its close he never ceased to be a poet, reminding us of Cowley's remark that it is seldom seen that the poet dies before the man. But Bryant never confounded the two vocations in any way, or allowed either to interfere to any appreciable extent with the other. They constituted two separate and distinct currents of intellectual life, one running through the other if you please, but never mixing with it, as the Gulf Stream winds its way through the broad Atlantic, though always distinguished from it by its higher temperature. None of the more vulgar considerations of authorship ever operated upon his muse so far as I was ever able to discern. He never sang for money; neither did he use his poetical gifts for worldly or professional ends. He used his feet for walking, and he used his wings for flying, but he never attempted to fly with his feet, nor to run with his wings. He earned his bread, and he fought the battle of life, with his journal, but he made no secret of the fact that he looked to his verses for the perpetuation of his name; when he put on his singing robes he practically withdrew from the world and went up into a high mountain, where the din and clamor of professional life in which he habitually dwelt was inaudible. On those occasions

'His soul was like a star and dwelt apart.'"

It was reserved for Mr. George William Curtis, at the request of the New York Historical Society, to close this series

of eloquent tributes, in the Academy of Music, December 30th, before a brilliant audience, which included the President of the republic, with his family, and whatever was notable in the law, the literature, the science, and the society of the metropolis.

"There was no eminent American," Mr. Curtis said, "upon whom the judgment of his countrymen would be more immediate and unanimous. The broad and simple outline of his character and career had become universally familiar, like a mountain or the sea, and in speaking of him I but repeat the thought of every American, and register a judgment already pronounced. A patriarch of our literature, and in a permanent sense the oldest of our poets, a scholar familiar with many languages and literatures, finely sensitive to the influence of nature, and familiar with trees and birds and flowers, he was especially fitted, it might be thought, for scholarly seclusion and the delights of the strict literary life. But he who melodiously marked the solitary way of the water-fowl through the rosy depth of the glowing heaven, and on the lonely New England hills,

'Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun,'

saw in the river and valley, in forest and ocean, only the solemn decoration of man's tomb—the serious, musing country-boy felt also the magic of human sympathy, the impulse of his country, the political genius of his race, and the poet became distinctively an American and a public political leader. In the active American life of this century he bore his full part, never quailing, never doubting, giving and taking blows; stern often, reserved, unsparing, but panoplied ever in an armor which no fabled Homeric hero wore, beyond the art of Vulcan to forge or the dark waters of the Styx to charm, the impenetrable armor of moral principle. Time as it passed chastened the ardor of the partisan, without relaxing the vital interest of the citizen in public affairs. His lofty personality rose above the clamor of selfish ambition, and in his life he reconciled, both in fact and to the popular imagination, the seeming incompatibility of literary taste and accomplishment and superiority with constant political activity. So rises the shining dome of Mont Blanc above the clustering forests and the roaring streams, and on its towering sides the growths of various climates and of differ-

ent zones, in due order, meet and mingle. It is by no official title, by no mere literary fame, by no signal or single service or work ; no marvellous Lear or Transfiguration, no stroke of state-craft calling to political life a new world to redress the balance of the old, no resounding Austerlitz or triumphant Trafalgar, that Bryant is commemorated. There may have been, in his long life-time, genius more affluent and creative, greater renown, abilities more commanding, careers more dazzling and romantic ; but no man, no American, living or dead, has more truly and amply illustrated the scope and the fidelity of Republican citizenship. . . .

"During all these busy years he had become a man of threescore and ten. The pleasant city that he knew when he came to New York was now the chief city of the Western Continent—one of the great cities of the world ; and the poet whose immortal distinction it was to have written the first memorable American poem, and whose fame was part of the national glory—the editor who, with perfect unselfishness and unswerving fidelity, had expounded and defended great fundamental principles of national progress and prosperity—became our Patriarch, our Mentor, our most conspicuous citizen. Every movement of art and literature, of benevolence and good citizenship, sought the decoration of his name. His presence was the grace of every festival, and although he had always instinctively shrunk from personal publicity, he yielded to a fate, benignant for the community, and to his other distinctions added that of the occasional orator. Yet all such associations were not only gilded with the lustre of his renown ; they had not only the advantage of his ample knowledge and various observations, but there was the stimulus of his temperament and character. His companions in society and at the club know that his great literary accomplishment was absolutely without pedantry, while it gave his conversation and writing the charm of apt allusion and most felicitous quotation ; but they know also how much greater was the man than the scholar, and that his character was as fine as his genius.

"We saw in his life the simple dignity which we associate with the old republics. So Lycurgus may have ruled in Sparta, so Cato may have walked in Rome—an uncrowned regality in that venerable head, as of one nurtured in Republican air, upon Republican traditions. But here and now, at this season, when our hearts recur to that Pilgrim landing from which so much of America sprang, we may grate-

fully remember that this son of New England was always, in the most generous and representative sense, an American. He loitered with the sympathy of a poet, with the fondness of a scholar, with the interest of a political thinker, in other and historic lands. He saw the Rhine and the Danube, Italy, Germany, England and Spain, Palestine and the West Indies. He was welcomed and flattered by famous men and beautiful women; but grave and simple, pleased but untouched, he passed through the maze of blandishment as a cool north wind blows through a garden of spices. Whoever saw Bryant saw America. Whoever talked with him felt the characteristic tone of American life. Whoever knew him comprehended the reason and perceived the quality of American greatness. Many Americans have been as warmly welcomed in other lands, many have acknowledged a generous hospitality with as gracious courtesy, but no one ever more fully and truly carried with him the perfectly appreciative but undazzled America: America tranquil, content, and expectant, the untitled cousin of the older world, born to as great a heritage and satisfied with her own. You will bear me witness, for you knew him, that in the same way here at home he Americanized every occasion, every enterprise in which he took part. I have seen him at some offering of homage to a foreign guest, skilfully withstanding the current of excessive compliment, natural at such times, yet without morose dissent, and only by a shrewd and playful humor, and with most friendly regard for the rites of hospitality, gently reminding us that manly and self-respecting courtesy never bows too low."

With the words in which Mr. Curtis closed his discourse, this imperfect memoir is also closed:

"Here, then, we leave him, with tender reverence for the father of our song, with grateful homage to the spotless and faithful citizen, with affectionate admiration for the simple and upright man. Here we leave him, and we—we go forward refreshed, strengthened, inspired, by the light of the life which, like a star serene and inextinguishable,

'Flames in the forehead of our morning sky.'"

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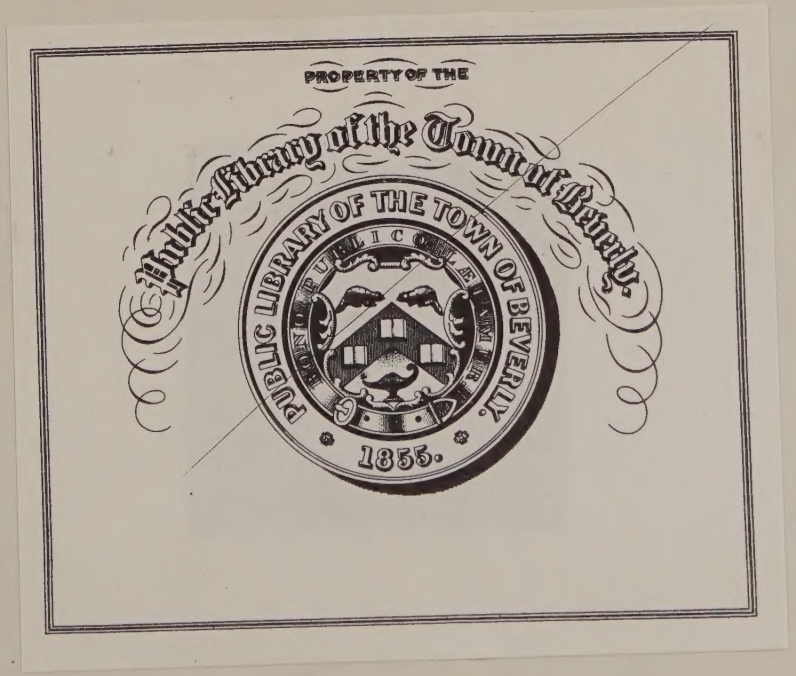
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